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**Journeys into Memory: Romani Identity and the  
Holocaust in Autobiographical Writing by German and  
Austrian Romanies**

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## Abstract

This PhD thesis examines the ‘working through’ of traumatic memories of the Holocaust and representations of Romani cultural identity in autobiographical writing by Romanies in Germany and Austria. In writing their memories in German, these Romani writers ended the ‘muteness’ previously surrounding their own experiences of persecution in the Third Reich and demanded an end to the official silence regarding the Romani Holocaust in their home countries.

The thesis aims to explore how the writing of these narratives works to create a space for Romani memories within German language written tradition and to assert a more positive Romani identity and space for this identity in their homelands. Further, it aims to demonstrate that, in the struggle to create this safe space, their texts also reveal insecurity and landscapes that are not free from threat. The thesis also addresses the broad question of whether or not the shift from oral to written tradition in order to represent experiences of the Holocaust will result in a continuation of Romani writing in Germany and Austria.

The thesis begins by examining the first Romani accounts of Holocaust memories published in Germany (1985) and Austria (1988) and ends with more recent narratives published in 2006 (Germany) and 2007 (Austria). In chapters one and two on writing by Philomena Franz and Ceija Stojka, I focus on their pioneering texts as assertions of space for Romani identity within their homelands; I analyse how these authors work through their traumatic memories by narrating their experiences and by identifying the landscapes of Germany and Austria as *Heimat*. In chapter 3, I continue to explore themes of *Heimat* and identity in Alfred Lessing and Karl Stojka’s accounts which, while working through their own traumatic memories of the Third Reich, struggle with the loss of Romani cultural identity in their homelands. In chapter four, I address the generational memory of the Holocaust in Otto Rosenberg’s account of his experiences in the concentration camps and his daughter Marianne Rosenberg’s recent autobiography. In chapter 5, I will examine the presence of the ‘threat of Auschwitz’ in Stefan Horvath’s writing, in which he remembers the attack on a Romani settlement in 1995 which killed his son and three other Romanies in Oberwart, Austria. In all of these chapters, attention will also be given to the editorial construction of these texts as well as their reception.

Throughout the thesis, I take a comparative approach, referring to similarities and differences between the works of these authors.

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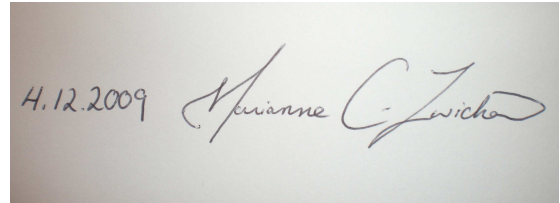
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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for my other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

A photograph of a handwritten signature and date on a light-colored surface. The date "4.12.2009" is written on the left, and the signature "Marianne C. Zwicker" is written to its right in a cursive script.

(Marianne C. Zwicker)



# Chapter 1

## Remembering the *Porrajmos*

### 1.1 Writing Memory and Identity

The emergence of German language Romani writing in Germany and Austria over the past twenty-five years marks a remarkable shift from oral to written tradition within German and Austrian Romani communities; these texts present a unique opportunity for dialogue between Romanies and non-Romanies in these countries. Ian Hancock, in the introduction to a groundbreaking anthology of Romani poetry and short prose from around the world, *The Roads of the Roma*,<sup>1</sup> traces the beginnings of Romani writing to a short essay written in Romani<sup>2</sup> by Aleksander Germano and published in Russia in 1915.<sup>3</sup> In the former Soviet Union, Romanies were recognised as an official minority in 1917; protected under the rights afforded them through this status, Romanies had the means to create cultural organisations including music schools, theatre groups, and literary magazines, where they had the opportunity to explore these arts in a supportive environment.<sup>4</sup> The former Yugoslavia also developed an active literary scene after 1945; the internationally renowned theatre group, ‘Pralipe’ has its roots in Skopje and now performs at the Theater an der Ruhr in Mülheim.<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to popular misconceptions about ‘Gypsy’ life, language and culture are an important part of Romani identity. Reemtsma writes that ‘angesichts eines fehlenden gemeinsamen Territoriums, fehlender nationaler Mythen, Geschichte oder Religion gewinnt die Sprache als

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<sup>1</sup>Ian Hancock, ‘Introduction’, in *The Roads of the Roma*, ed. by Ian Hancock, Siobhan Dowd and Rajko Djurić (Hatfield: U of Hertfordshire P, 1998), pp. 9-21. This book is an international anthology of Roma poetry and prose, the first of its kind, and provides a useful overview of contemporary Romani writers.

<sup>2</sup>Romanies have their own language which has its roots in Sanskrit and has been influenced by borrowing from other languages in the countries through which they passed in their migration from India through Europe. I am guided in my use of the word ‘Romani’ to refer to the language of the Romanies by Ian Hancock’s use of the term in *Roads of the Roma* and by Yaron Matras in *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002). In Germany, the Romani language is referred to as *Romanes*.

<sup>3</sup>Hancock, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>See Katrin Reemtsma, *Sinti und Roma: Geschichte, Kultur, Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 1996), pp. 76-78.

<sup>5</sup>Reemtsma, p. 77.

identitätsstiftender Faktor zwischen Roma an Bedeutung'.<sup>6</sup> Hancock notes common themes in Romani writing, which include: references to distant Indian roots, celebration of Romani identity, closeness to nature, loss of freedom, and, overwhelmingly, daily confrontations with prejudice and persecution.<sup>7</sup> Beate Eder also highlights the common themes of nature images and writing about persecution in her study, *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden: Bilderwelten in der Literatur der Sinti und Roma*, where she uses a comparative approach to trace themes and images in Romani writing from Europe and Canada.<sup>8</sup> Eastern European Romani writing emerged earlier due to literary and cultural organisations which provided a space to explore and to express cultural identities, whereas in Austria and Germany, where Romani communities are not as populous and are more disparate, Romani writing has only been published in the last twenty-five years. Pioneering German-language narratives focus on the specific persecution and victimisation that the authors or their families experienced in the Holocaust, referred to in Romani as *Porrajmos*, 'the devouring', and reveals itself as a means for overcoming the sense of rupture and loss resulting from the mass destruction of Romani lives in the Third Reich. Further, they reveal an intention to educate the reader about the marginalisation of Romanies as officially recognised victims of the Holocaust. As Romanies had primarily relied on oral tradition for the transmission of memory and history, the loss of Romani lives also marked a loss of stories, family history and collective memory. I will discuss Romani oral tradition further in Section 1.3 of this Introduction.

### 1.1.1 Aims and Objectives

This thesis aims to examine new autobiographical texts by Romanies in Austria and Germany and to explore the significance of the transition from a predominantly oral tradition of communication to the writing of autobiographical texts in order to communicate the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust. All of the authors discussed in this thesis incorporate oral traditions in their texts by telling the reader about songs and stories exchanged in Romani families and the importance of these; the relationship between orality and written culture will be explored in this thesis as a way of determining the extent to which writing provides a new medium for the Romani community to articulate traumatic memories and to communicate a difficult history.<sup>9</sup> This study will treat for the first time a selection of these recent texts for the purpose of expanding the existing Holocaust canon, which, for good reason, has been largely determined by the Jewish experience. It does not, therefore, aim to make a comparison between written

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<sup>6</sup>Reemstma, p. 74.

<sup>7</sup>Hancock, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>See Beate Eder, *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden: Bilderwelten in der Literatur der Sinti und Roma* (Drava: Klagenfurt, 1993), pp. 91-92, 128. Hereafter cited as *Geboren*. See also Beate Eder-Jordan, 'Mutter, warum hast du mich zur Welt gebracht?' Roma-Literatur im Donauraum' in *Sinti und Roma: Eine Spurensuche*, ed. by Elisabeth Tauber (Schlanders: Arunda Löwenzahn 67, 2006), pp. 106-119. Here, p. 117. Hereafter cited as 'Roma Literatur'.

<sup>9</sup>Exploration into the relationship between orality and written culture in Romani communities would certainly merit a study on its own that would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

memories of the Holocaust by Romanies and non-Romanies, but rather to use the methods of analysis applied to other Holocaust texts and to analyse Romani texts in terms of these. In doing so, Romani narratives concerning the Holocaust can be seen as part of and a contribution to the wider Holocaust canon, but also worthy of individual analysis. In order to explore the uniqueness of these texts which recall Romani experiences of the Holocaust, I examine these works in terms of their representations of traumatic memories, Heimat and belonging, and genre. The existing canon of Holocaust writing has, of course, been treated from these perspectives in the past.<sup>10</sup> I aim to use these approaches in my reading of the texts I discuss in this thesis; crucially, however, I illuminate the ways in which these texts are marked as Romani and are therefore distinctive. These approaches are thus bound by an investigation into the underlying theme found in these texts concerning the exploration of Romani identity, which as I will prove, is at the heart of what makes these texts unique; it is at the core of the authors' representations of trauma and Heimat, and is an important factor in the construction of their texts. Exploring and endeavouring to define a collective Romani identity and emphasising the inherent individualities within this collective identity, as well as the uniqueness of the authors' own perspectives as writers, becomes the focal point of their works.

Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt highlight the importance of Holocaust memory in the construction of Romani identity:

The chronotope, or transhistorical, symbol-laden site of memories, functions to construct the group identity. Auschwitz may be seen as one such chronotope, with awareness of the racial motives tied in to an awareness of contemporary manifestations of anti-Gypsyism. For the Romanies the act of remembering gives a heightened sense of a common shared past, and also a better understanding of the site for all humankind'.<sup>11</sup>

However, with the memory of the Holocaust as a catalyst for a common Romani identity, the possibility of using trauma to create a new identity arises; this presents a problem in that this new identity then becomes synonymous with victimhood, which as many critics have shown is a potentially universal, abstract category that can erase difference.<sup>12</sup> The texts analysed in this thesis do reveal a tendency towards this risk; however, I will argue that the authors' presentation of so much else of Romani culture and identity and their own unique way of telling about the Romani Holocaust reveals a cautious venturing of the positive aspects of Romani life presented in opposition to the widely believed stereotypes. The writers of these texts engage in a dialogue with their non-Romani audience, presenting the memories of the Holocaust, to which the reader

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<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Andrea Reiter's study of Holocaust writing, *'Auf daß sie entsteigen der Dunkelheit': Die literarische Bewältigung von KZ-Erfahrung* (Löcker Verlag: Vienna, 1995) or the updated translation of this text, Andrea Reiter and Patrick Camillar, *Narrating the Holocaust* (London: Continuum, 2005).

<sup>11</sup>Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt, 'The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images', in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of Romanies / 'Gypsies' in European Cultures*, ed. by Susan Tebbutt and Nicholas Saul (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2004), pp. 1-11. Here, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>LaCapra, p. 23. See also Carolyn J. Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004) and Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000).

has a responsibility to listen; among these memories, however, they reveal much of their own cultural identity and Romani experience of their homelands to the reader.

Research has been conducted on the history of Romanies in Germany and Austria as well as in Europe more generally. An overview of these studies will be provided in the second part of this Introduction. However, very little has been written on German language writing produced by Romanies in Germany and Austria. Beate Eder, in addition to *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden*, breaks new ground by highlighting the uniqueness of Romani writing through identifying common themes and cultural marking in an international selection of Romani narratives in a number of academic articles.<sup>13</sup> While Eder has provided a useful comparative study of various Romani writers with *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden*, in which she includes Philomena Franz and Ceija Stojka, she does not analyse their autobiographical texts in great depth. By contrast, I examine separately the work of German language Romani writers, for whom the shift to a written tradition can be directly related to the trauma of the Holocaust and the ensuing secondary victimisation of Romanies in Germany and Austria through the long subsequent silence regarding the Romani Holocaust. Susan Tebbutt has done much work in opening up the discussion of German-language Romani writing and Romani artwork, particularly the works of Ceija and Karl Stojka,<sup>14</sup> but as she points out ‘much work remains to be done on charting the comparisons between the experiences of Roma in different European countries and how the language, culture and literature have developed in each country against varying sociopolitical backgrounds’.<sup>15</sup>

This study attempts to take a concentrated view of the development of Romani literature in Germany and Austria. I chose to look specifically at texts written by native German and Austrian Romanies and to discuss their works in terms of the strong connection to their homelands (also the lands of the perpetrators during the Third Reich). I have not included works by Yenish writers,<sup>16</sup> though the works of Simone Schönelt (Austria) and Mariella Mehr (Switzerland)

<sup>13</sup>In addition to *Geboren* and ‘Roma Literatur’, see Beate Eder-Jordan, ‘Ausbruch aus der Anonymität: Roma-Literatur im historischen und kulturellen Kontext’, in Ceija Stojka, *Meine Wahl zu Schreiben. Ich kann es nicht* (Innsbruck: EYE, 2005), pp. 65-75; ‘Camelamos naquerar’ — Wir wollen sprechen. Eine Konstante in der Theaterarbeit und literarischen Schaffen von Roma und Sinti, in *Music, Language and Literature of the Roma and Sinti*, ed. by Max Baumann (Berlin: VWB, 2000), pp. 35-51.

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, ‘Challenging New Literary Images of Sinti and Roma’, in *Sinti and Roma in German-Speaking Society and Literature*, ed. by Susan Tebbutt (NY, Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 129-144; ‘Marginalization and Memories: Ceija Stojka’s Autobiographical Writing’, in ‘Other’ Austrians: *Post-1945 Austrian Women’s Writing*, ed. by Allyson Fiddler (Peter Lang: 1998), pp. 141-151; ‘Disproportional Representation: Romanies and European Art’, in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of ‘Gypsies’ / Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. by Susan Tebbutt and Nicholas Saul (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2004), pp. 159-177; ‘My Name in the Third Reich was Z: 5742’, in *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle. Commitment in Romani Studies*, ed. by Thomas Acton (Hatfield: U of Hertfordshire P, 2000), pp. 69-80.

<sup>15</sup>Susan Tebbutt, ‘Conclusion’, in *Sinti and Roma in German-Speaking Society and Literature*, (NY, Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 145-156. Here, p. 155. Hereafter cited as ‘Conclusion’.

<sup>16</sup>The Yenish people, in German *Jenische*, live mostly in Switzerland, but also in Austria, Germany and France; they were traditionally a nomadic community, but are now mainly settled. State-run settlement programmes directed by Swiss authorities from the early 19th century until they were officially stopped in 1973, dictated and implemented the forced settlement and ‘integration’ of ‘racially degenerate’ Yenish people in Switzerland. See Carmel Finnan,

present interesting views of Yenish communities in Austria and Switzerland.<sup>17</sup> The writers discussed in this thesis offer a unique opportunity to analyse their texts in terms of the themes that present themselves, such as working through trauma, establishing Romani cultural identity, communicating memory and negotiating the spaces of German and Austrian landscape, and inscribing their own personal and collective histories into the histories of their home countries.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.1.2 Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Theoretical approaches relating to trauma, Heimat, landscape, and genre used in this thesis emerge within an existing post Cold-War context, where the Holocaust is a global theme and memory is a central theoretical discourse in the Humanities. Romani writing endeavours to assert its place in existing memory debates and to emphasise the importance of gaining official recognition of Romanies' victimisation in the Holocaust. In *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden*, Beate Eder concludes that Romani literature as a broad and international category reveals unique features which draw on its relationship to Romani culture and history. She points out that Romani writers most often use an autobiographical form, 'psychologisch-typologische Analogien', and that 'das literarische Schaffen bedeutet in vielen Fällen Bürgerrechtsarbeit'.<sup>19</sup> This observation that Romani literature especially has a pronounced civic and political function in the present helps to explain my use of Dominick LaCapra's psychoanalytically informed theory concerning trauma and history.

In his *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra has used the phrase 'working through trauma' to describe the 'articulatory practice' of finding a way to narrate the experience of trauma and thus to do something pragmatic and positive in the present with the experience of past trauma.<sup>20</sup> In recent discussions of trauma that have evolved partly due to the questioning of linguistic representations of the traumatic events of the Holocaust, Cathy Caruth emphasises the literality in the repetition of traumatic memory, remarking that: 'The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a

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<sup>17</sup>From Survival to Subversion: Strategies of Self-Representation in Selected Works by Mariella Mehr', in *The Role of the Romanies. Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies' / Romanies in European Cultures* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2005), pp. 145-158. Here, pp. 145-146.

<sup>18</sup>See the following works by Mariella Mehr: her autobiographical novel *steinzeit* (Berne: Zytglogge, 1990); her play about her forced separation from her parents through the work of the *Hilfswerk für die Kinder der Landstrasse* which took Yenish children away from their parents as part of a strategy which aimed for the assimilation of Yenish people: *Kinder der Landstrasse: ein Hilfswerk, ein Theater und die Folgen* (Berne: Zytglogge, 1987); and a collection of poetry in German and Romani: *Nachrichten aus dem Exil* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 1998). By Simone Schönnett, see *Im Moos* (Weitra: Bibliothek der Provinz, 2001). On writing by Mariella Mehr, see Finnan, pp. 145-158.

<sup>19</sup>See Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* 2nd ed. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2003), p. 293.

<sup>20</sup>Beate Eder, *Geboren*, p. 230.

<sup>21</sup>See LaCapra, p. 22.

history that they cannot entirely possess'.<sup>21</sup> This position, which asserts that traumatic memory is relived and cannot be represented or symbolised, is criticised and challenged by Ruth Leys in her seminal study, *Trauma: a Genealogy*.<sup>22</sup> LaCapra's idea of 'working through' mediates between these two positions, as it emphasises the process of reliving, recalling, and trying to represent traumatic memories of the Holocaust. The act of writing can be seen to fit in this process, and the writers I address in this thesis all endeavour to represent traumatic memory.

The Romani Rights movement today could be described as an 'articulatory practice', taking this to mean writing, public speaking, activism, and political engagement. The writers discussed in this thesis all can be said to be engaging in such activity, as they themselves use their writing as a way of articulating their traumatic memories and working through trauma, while recognising the problems of Romanies in the present. In writing down their experiences of the Holocaust and acknowledging their collective experience of victimisation, Romanies are turning a negative experience into something productive in a collective, communal sense. As I will demonstrate, this sense of positivity varies in the case of each writer, but all of them have the intention to some degree to make public the experience of the Romani Holocaust and to combat any further secondary victimisation by speaking out and articulating their personal memories of this communal experience. I focus on these writers' working through trauma both in the narrow individual sense as well as in the much wider sense of an articulatory practice that follows a collective, communal agenda in the present. These two levels of articulation are however connected, in that speaking out in the wider sense is part of the individual's effort to work through their personal pain, thus highlighting the collective and the subjective experience of trauma.

Further, I am guided in my analysis of these texts by Austro-Jewish writer Jean Améry's essays 'Wieviel Heimat braucht der Mensch' and 'Ressentiments'.<sup>23</sup> Améry's notion of Ressentiment can be seen to describe the very beginning of articulatory practice, in that when his groundbreaking collection of essays appeared in 1966, it historically addressed two levels of victimisation in the postwar present because the original experience of the camps had not been adequately acknowledged by the perpetrator nations. The secondary victimisation in the present of the 1950s and 1960s was thus premised on a complete lack of acknowledgement of actual victim experience in the Holocaust. While Améry is a Jewish and not a Romani writer, his concept of Ressentiment is particularly useful in the contemporary context of the Romani Rights movement. In many ways his position when he spoke out in the late 1960s is paradigmatic for describing this more recent experience: the traumas endured by Jewish and Romani victims were ignored, for differing lengths of time, by majority German / Austrian culture; therefore,

<sup>21</sup>Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Ruth Leys, *Trauma: a Genealogy* (U of Chicago P, 2000).

<sup>23</sup>Jean Améry, 'Wieviel Heimat braucht der Mensch' and 'Ressentiments' in *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne: Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten* 2nd edn (Stuttgart: Klett, 1977). Originally published in Munich: Szczesny, 1966.

the moment of expressing, among other things, Ressentiment, becomes a breakthrough moment in the political act of asserting victim identity and demanding official recognition.

A key theme in the exploration of Heimat in these texts is the search for a safe and protective place for self-realisation as well as a secure place and environment for Romanies to live within their home countries. The voicing of the need for Heimat within these texts works towards achieving this safe space in Germany and Austria. In addition to being a physical space of national landscape, Heimat in these texts is explored as a literary space and a place within German and Austrian literary and cultural history. Aleida Assmann draws a connection between land, history and cultural memory, saying:

Das Land ist mehr als nur eine Grundlage materieller Versorgung; es ist selbst das kulturelle Gedächtnis, an das der Protagonist wieder angeschlossen wird. Es ist überzogen mit Geschichten, und der Protagonist lernt, seine eigene Geschichte als Teil dieser uralten Geschichten zu lesen.<sup>24</sup>

The longing for a feeling of secure Heimat in these texts gives voice to a longing and need for autobiographical expression and a place for Romani cultural identity in the German language. These are now being articulated tentatively through the voicing of trauma; the insecurity which is revealed through the victim experience informs the reader that this safe space for Romani territorial and non-territorial Heimat has not yet been achieved. Although these writers work to achieve a sense of belonging for themselves and other Romanies along with their cultural traditions by exercising their connection to German cultural traditions in the form of literary voice, this voice is still tentative and relies on the voicing of trauma to test this new means of communication / expression.

I analyse these works in terms of genre in order to explore the construction of these new texts and to discuss what this might reveal to the reader. Experience of the Holocaust has been remembered and represented through the medium of various genres, including fiction, autobiography, testimony, poetry, and graphic novels. Interesting questions arise about the ways in which traumatic memories can be represented when these genres and the extent to which they overlap in texts about the Holocaust are analysed.<sup>25</sup> Where Romani experience of the Holocaust has been mentioned in comprehensive studies of Holocaust experience or literature, works by Romanies are mentioned merely as a footnote, parenthetical reference, or a way of adding something to a broad Holocaust narrative.<sup>26</sup> However, as Eder points out in

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<sup>24</sup>Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

<sup>25</sup>For example, see Benjamin Wilkomirski's text, *Bruchstücke. Aus einer Kindheit 1939-1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1995), which deals with what he claimed was his own childhood surviving the Holocaust. When it later emerged that these experiences were fictional, this prompted many questions about the literary value of his text and much controversy over the acceptability of fiction in reflecting on Holocaust experience. On the debates surrounding Wilkomirski, see Lawrence Langer, *Using and Abusing the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, Andrea Reiter's *Narrating the Holocaust*, where she briefly mentions Ceija Stojka's work, p. 267.

reference to Ceija Stojka and Philomena Franz's works, these autobiographical texts are worth literary exploration and analysis. She notes in *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden*:

In Diskussionen sah ich mich wiederholt mit der Meinung konfrontiert, daß eine Autobiographie 'ja keine richtige Literatur sei'. Dieser vorliegenden Arbeit liegt jedoch ein (hinlänglich bekanntes) Literaturverständnis zugrunde, nach dem ein Text weder 'schön' noch 'fiktiv' sein muß, um als Literatur zu gelten.<sup>27</sup>

Although the majority of texts discussed in this thesis focus on traumatic memories of the Holocaust, the authors reveal much about Romani identity, and their own individual identities as writers, through the act of writing and how they choose to represent the events they have witnessed. Stefan Horvath, the last writer I will discuss in this thesis, breaks new ground in this respect by including fictional elements in his autobiographical work, imagining the circumstances surrounding the traumatic experiences of his family to which he wants to bear witness.

Tony Kushner asks that Holocaust testimony be read with attention to the 'internal dynamics' of the narratives and an eye for what these pieces of writing can tell readers about the writer and the unique experiences they present. He points out that 'testimony itself, if not always in the form of soundbites, is rarely allowed to have space to reveal its own internal dynamics, especially in relation to the rest of the person's life story'.<sup>28</sup> The idea of the 'life story' is important in my analysis of these texts. Testimony describes the practice of attesting to a particular (historical) event and relies on the voice and memory of the witness for authenticity; therefore it has an autobiographical dimension, whereby autobiography is understood to reflect more broadly on a life story and will necessarily subsume forms of testimony. Dori Laub suggests a definition of testimony as: 'The process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as the witness'.<sup>29</sup> Witnessing a traumatic historical event forces a crisis of identity and, as Laura Marcus points out in *Autobiographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, autobiography can serve as 'a crucial site for the exploration of new identities'.<sup>30</sup> This thesis demonstrates that, while the authors discussed are clearly testifying to their own and Romani experience of the Holocaust, they make use of the space autobiography provides for the exploration of identity and for the 'internal dynamics' mentioned by Kushner; they do this to varying degrees by reflecting on their whole lives rather than focusing solely on the historical events they seek to verify.

I have chosen to explore Romani identity in this thesis in terms of its articulation both as a matter of personal self-definition and as something that shifts and changes through historical

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<sup>27</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 123.

<sup>28</sup>Tony Kushner, 'The Victims: Dealing with Testimony', in Donald Bloxham and Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust: Critical and Historical Approaches* (Manchester UP: 2005), pp. 16-60. Here, p. 34.

<sup>29</sup>Dori Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. ed. by Cathy Caruth (Johns Hopkins UP: Baltimore and London, 1995), pp. 61-75. Here, p. 70. Hereafter cited as 'Truth and Testimony'.

<sup>30</sup>Laura Marcus, *Autobiographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester UP: 1994), p. 281.



experience. Indeed, the Holocaust is a prime example of a historical event which was experienced by many Romanies and effected a historical change in self-understanding as individuals and as a group. In many ways, the Holocaust proved to be a unifying force for many different Romani groups who had not previously defined themselves as part of a larger collective. However, as I will demonstrate, Romanies do continue to define themselves primarily as part of their sub-group while now also identifying themselves as part of a larger Romani community. I take as my starting point for exploring the expression of Romani identity in this text from Katrin Reemtsma, who points out that Romani cultural identity is ‘eine mehrschichtige Identität, d.h. die meisten Roma verstehen sich gleichzeitig als Angehörige einer bestimmten Romagruppe oder als Roma und als Angehörige der jeweiligen (regionalen und/oder nationalen) Mehrheitsbevölkerungen’.<sup>31</sup> Tebbutt warns that, despite Romanies being a heterogeneous group with many sub-groups and layers to their cultural identity, ‘their diversity is generally submerged under stereotypical images’.<sup>32</sup> In this thesis I do not only look for similarities within the works of these authors; I will focus primarily on what the texts say about their writers and what these writers suggest about their cultural backgrounds and, if applicable, their own identifications of themselves within a wider collective identity.

### 1.1.3 Selected Authors and Texts

The first Romani narrative to be published in Germany was Latscho Tschawo’s *Die Befreiung des Latscho Tschawo. Ein Sinto-Leben in Deutschland* in 1984. Tschawo specifically avoids speaking about the Holocaust in his text and begins his narrative with his release from Auschwitz in January, 1945. He writes: ‘Zwei Jahre Auschwitz, bitte erlassen Sie mir eine genaue Schilderung dieser zwei Jahre. Es ist sowieso kaum zu glauben’.<sup>33</sup> This thesis begins by discussing the work of Philomena Franz, who in 1985 was the first Romani to publish her memories of the Holocaust in a narrative entitled *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*.<sup>34</sup> Her narrative details her traumatic memories of the Holocaust and the loss of her sister, mother, and other family members in the concentration camps. The act of writing is presented as therapeutic in her text, and there is a suggestion that the narration of these traumatic events offers a way of confronting and ‘working through’ this trauma.<sup>35</sup> However, Franz’s narrative reveals much more about her own personal identity and Romani cultural identity in her descriptions of life

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<sup>31</sup>Reemtsma, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup>Tebbutt, ‘From Carmen to Coppersmith? The Unity and Diversity of the Romani Culture in Europe’, in *Unity and Diversity in the New Europe*, ed. by B. Axford, D. Berghahn and N. Hewlett (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 213-228. Here, p. 217.

<sup>33</sup>Latscho Tschawo, *Die Befreiung des Latscho Tschawo. Ein Sinto-Leben in Deutschland* (Bornheim-Merten: 1984), p. 10.

<sup>34</sup>Philomena Franz, *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* (Freiburg: Herder, 1985).

<sup>35</sup>I am guided in my use of the phrase ‘working through trauma’ throughout this thesis by Dominick LaCapra’s concept of ‘working through’ traumatic memories of the Holocaust through the practise of articulation and narration. See Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001), pp. 21-22.

with her family before the camps, her experiences of the camps as a Romani woman, and her efforts to inscribe her own Romani cultural history within the landscape of Germany.<sup>36</sup> In the second chapter of this thesis, I will discuss Ceija Stojka's narrative, *Wir leben im Verborgenen: Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin*, which was published in Austria in 1988.<sup>37</sup> Here, Stojka remembers her experiences as a child in the concentration camps and portrays her memories of fighting for survival alongside her mother, sisters and the other women and children they befriended in the camps. Significantly, Ceija Stojka later went on to write *Reisende auf dieser Welt: aus dem Leben einer Rom-Zigeunerin*, which is still one of the few narratives that gives insight into Romani life after 1945.<sup>38</sup> I will also discuss Franz's and Stojka's representations of their experiences in the concentration camps as women. Holocaust scholars have in recent years drawn attention to the 'double victimisation' of women in the concentration camps who were victimised as Jews and as women.<sup>39</sup> I analyse the texts of Franz and Stojka to explore their victimisation as Romanies and as women. After Stojka and Franz first revealed their stories of surviving the Holocaust to the German-speaking public, a number of Romani survivors of the Holocaust followed by writing about their own experiences.<sup>40</sup>

In the third chapter, I will discuss works by Alfred Lessing and Karl Stojka,<sup>41</sup> where the struggle between Romani identities and their identifications with their own homelands is particularly relevant. Alfred Lessing, through his strategic denial of Romani identity in order to avoid the concentration camps, reveals the distressing terrain of torn loyalties and disrupted senses of security and belonging within a landscape that, for Romanies, had its own association with Romani culture and tradition, and was now being threatened, reminiscent of W.G. Sebald's portrayal of the 'Unheimlichkeit der Heimat'.<sup>42</sup> Karl Stojka takes this further by highlighting the Romani cultural traditions which he feels have been lost as a direct result of the Holocaust. Stojka mourns the 'destruction of Romani identity', which he identifies as 'Hitler's

<sup>36</sup>Compare Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

<sup>37</sup>Ceija Stojka. *Wir leben im Verborgenen: Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1988). Hereafter cited as *Verborgenen*.

<sup>38</sup>Ceija Stojka, *Reisende auf dieser Welt: aus dem Leben einer Rom-Zigeunerin* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1992). For more on life after the end of the war, see also her brother's autobiography *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause: Das Leben und Wandern des Zigeuners Karl Stojka* (Vienna: Picus, 1994).

<sup>39</sup>See Anna Hardman, *Women and the Holocaust* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust Research Papers 1.3, 1999-2000). See also Zoe Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (OUP: Oxford, 2006).

<sup>40</sup>These include: Lolo Reinhardt, *Überwintern. Jugenderinnerungen eines schwäbischen Zigeuners* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1999); Walter Stanoski Winter, *WinterZeit. Erinnerungen eines deutschen Sinto, der Auschwitz überlebt hat*, ed. by Thomas Neumann and Michael Zimmermann (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1999); Anna Metzbach and Josef Behringer, 'Wer wird die nächste sein?' *Die Leidensgeschichte einer SinteZZa, die Auschwitz überlebte* (Frankfurt: Brandes Apsel, 1999); Josef Muscha Müller, *Und weinen darf ich auch nicht... Ausgrenzung, Sterilisation, Deportation — eine Kindheit in Deutschland* (Berlin: 2002); Mongo Stojka *Papierene Kinder: Glück, Zerstörung und Neubeginn einer Roma-Familie in Österreich* (Vienna: Molden, 2000).

<sup>41</sup>Alfred Lessing, *Mein Leben im Versteck* (Düsseldorf: Zebulon, 1993). Hereafter cited as *Versteck*. Karl Stojka, *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause* (Vienna: Picus, 1994). Hereafter cited as *Zuhause*.

<sup>42</sup>See W.G. Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat: Essays zur österreichischen Literatur* 2nd edn, (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2004), in which Sebald explores the tensions between Heimat and exile in Austrian literature.

biggest crime' (*Zuhause*, 104).

All of the authors discussed in this study returned to their homelands after the end of the war. Reemtsma writes that the victimisation of the Romanies continued 'auch nach 1945 [...], als Sinti und Roma mit dem durch die Verfolgung verursachten Leid, mit der Verarmung und der neuerlichen Ausgrenzung aus der auf Schuldverdrängung und wirtschaftlichen Aufstieg orientierten bundesdeutschen Gesellschaft allein gelassen wurden'.<sup>43</sup> While these authors had few other options but to return to their home countries due to their lack of recognition as victims, they do all express the feeling that these countries are *Heimat*; they would not want to go anywhere else. Franz and Ceija Stojka, however, emphasise their deep connection with their respective home countries much more emphatically than do Lessing and Karl Stojka, for whom the concept of homeland is crucially linked to the exploration of Romani identity. The images of 'Zigeuner' in German-language literature have perpetuated stereotypes of the 'Zigeuner' as '*fremd*', '*ortlos*' and '*heimatslos*'.<sup>44</sup> As I will discuss further in Section 1.5 of this Introduction, these attributes have contributed to the romanticising and criminalising of Romanies in Germany and Austria. However, all the authors discussed in this thesis display a strong identification with geographical location and the ancestral bond they feel with their homeland; this sense of *Heimat* is something these authors address and seek to inform readers about in their texts.

Chapters four and five of this thesis focus on the communication of traumatic Holocaust memories to the second generation.<sup>45</sup> In Otto Rosenberg's *Das Brennglas*, the communication of his memories functions both as a way of working through the traumatic memories of his past and as a political tool to inform his readership about the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust and the necessity of working towards a collective Romani identity and a collective memory of the Holocaust. Slawomir Kapralski writes that among Romanies 'no pattern of communicating memory of the sufferings of the war has been elaborated, even within families'.<sup>46</sup> Rosenberg's communication of traumatic memory will further be analysed in reference to his daughter, Marianne Rosenberg's, autobiography, *Kokolores*, and her own 'marking' of her father's past trauma. Her text deals with her father's silences and the traumatic memories which she can only perceive through his expressions of pain and the absence of extended family. Otto Rosenberg engages in creating a narrative of his experiences in order to support the

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<sup>43</sup>Reemtsma, p. 136.

<sup>44</sup>cf. Claudia Breger, *Ortlosigkeit des Fremden: 'Zigeunerinnen' und 'Zigeuner' in der deutschsprachigen Literatur um 1800* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), pp. 2-15.

<sup>45</sup>On generational theory, see Sigrid Weigel "'Generation" as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945', *The Germanic Review*, 77 4 (2002), 264-77. The 'second generation' refers to the one born after the experiential or first generation; this generation is often affected by the burden of a past they did not experience first-hand. Weigel notes that the symptoms which mark all traumatic experience can be passed on to the next generation (p. 265).

<sup>46</sup>Slawomir Kapralski 'Ritual of Memory in Constructing the Modern Identity of Eastern European Romanies', in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of Romanies / 'Gypsies' in European Cultures*, ed. by Susan Tebbutt and Nicholas Saul (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2004), pp. 208-227. Here, p. 217.

endeavour for Romanies to be officially recognised as victims of the Holocaust, and to request that German society remember and take responsibility for the crimes against Romanies in the Third Reich as well as the ensuing secondary victimisation through silence after the end of the war.

As I will illustrate in the second part of this introduction, all of the works analysed in this thesis can be seen as a contribution to the Romani rights movement and as testimony to the silenced victimisation of the Romanies in the Holocaust. As Eder points out:

Die Bedeutung der autobiographischen Literatur innerhalb der Literatur der Roma ist nicht zu unterschätzen. Jahrhundertlang fand ein — für die Öffentlichkeit — ‘stummes Leiden’ statt. Es wurde zwar in Liedtexten und der Musik, in Legenden und Märchen ausgedrückt, aber nicht — wie jetzt in der autobiographischen oder auch fiktiven Literatur — schriftlich fixiert.<sup>47</sup>

This ‘stummes Leiden’ is addressed in Stefan Horvath’s *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* as he attempts to imagine the experiences of the Holocaust and writes poems and short pieces of prose where he explores the experience of Auschwitz and tries to reconstruct the environment that his parents and other relatives faced there. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will analyse Stefan Horvath’s second generation writing and his own marking of past trauma in these texts; in addition, I will discuss his portrayal of the continued threat Romanies still face in Austria today, illustrated in his second narrative, *Katzenstreu*. Remarkable in this text by Horvath, is his branching out into the realm of fictional autobiography in his recollection of the traumatic attack on the Oberwart Romani settlement in 1995 that killed his son. He breaks new ground in Romani literary production by including his imagined perspectives of the perpetrator’s life and thoughts as well those of the Austrian public, blending the boundaries of genre even further by including clear fictional elements in his text. In many ways this makes his text unique from other Romani writing and could be said to take Romani writing further in the direction of a new literary tradition.

This thesis will conclude with a discussion of the future and direction of Romani writing in Austria and Germany. The overarching research question of this thesis asks whether or not this writing could mark the beginning of a new Romani German language written tradition. Due to the scattered and relatively small populations of Romanies in Germany and Austria and, for many Romanies, the continued strategic denial of their Romani identities, the more realistic answer to this question tends towards the negative.<sup>48</sup> However, it is interesting to note the influence that Eastern European Romanies from the former Yugoslavia have had on Romani writing in Germany and Austria in the past twenty years. In Germany, most notable is perhaps

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<sup>47</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 120.

<sup>48</sup>I would like to thank Peter Widmann at the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Technische Universität zu Berlin for this information (October, 2006). Many Romanies in Germany and Austria still today deny their Romani heritage and instead claim to be Italian or Greek in order to avoid discrimination. Compare with Cejka Stojka’s statements regarding this denial in *Verborgenen*, p. 148.

Rajko Djurić, an outspoken activist and supporter of Romani literary tradition who has written poetry in both German and Romani.<sup>49</sup> In Austria, centred particularly around the Romano Centro in Vienna, writers such as poet Ilija Jovanović, who has written poetry in Romani and German and won the Theodor Körner Prize in 1999, and Mišo Nikolić from Serbia, contribute to an emerging Austrian Romani literary scene.<sup>50</sup> As it stands, Romani writing continues to be published by publishers specialising in ‘minority literature’ such as Drava, EYE, lex liszt, and Picus in Austria and Zebulon and Herder in Germany. Beate Eder describes her search for Romani literature in the early nineties as difficult, noting: ‘sie ist lose, verstreut, steht in enger Beziehung zur Kultur des jeweiligen Landes, in dem die Autoren leben, und selten in direktem Kontakt zur Literatur anderer Roma’.<sup>51</sup> While there are many more published Romani narratives now than there were when Eder first conducted her study, Romani writing is still very young, in Germany and Austria particularly; it is essential, to take these self-representations that have now been presented to German-speaking communities and engage in a dialogue to analyse the close relationship between the cultural traditions of the authors’ home countries and Romani cultural traditions.

## 1.2 Context and Previous Research

The Romani people are many different groups with diverse norms and customs; these various groups have joined together in the last fifty years in order to fight the prejudice that has so long been directed towards them as one group. While they had long been considered by non-Romanies to be one group and were thus labled ‘Gypsies’<sup>52</sup> in English-speaking countries and ‘Zigeuner’ in German speaking lands, the idea of one Romani people is relatively new for Romanies themselves.<sup>53</sup> They had long thought of themselves in terms of family groups or tribes and although the idea of one collective Romani identity is becoming more prevalent, the identification with their own respective Romani communities still remains strong. This is perhaps typified most usefully in Germany, where Romanies are referred to as ‘*Sinti und Roma*’ rather than just *Roma*. The Sinti are one Romani community who have lived in Germany for centuries.<sup>54</sup> The fact that they still want to be referred to separately indicates a desire to be seen primarily as belonging to that group, though representatives of the Sinti do acknowledge

<sup>49</sup>See, for example, *Zigeunerische Elegien. Gedichte auf Romani und Deutsch* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1989). Djurić also addresses the persecution of Romanies in his poetry and prose. He has also worked extensively on advocating and publicising Romani literature and is a member of *PEN Romani Voice*.

<sup>50</sup>Ilija Jovanović, *Vom Wegrund, Dromese rigatar* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 2006); *Bündel — Budzo* (Innsbruck: EYE, 2000). Mišo Nikolić, *...und dann zogen wir weiter. Lebenslinien einer Romafamilie* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 1997); *Landfahrer. Auf den Wegen eines Rom* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 2000).

<sup>51</sup>cf. Eder, *Geboren*, p. 232.

<sup>52</sup>This name came from the assumption that the ‘dark-skinned newcomers’ in Europe had come from Egypt (Fraser, p. 2).

<sup>53</sup>See Reemtsma, pp. 136-144, on the beginnings of the Romani movement.

<sup>54</sup>See Fraser, pp. 88-93.

they are part of the wider Romani community.<sup>55</sup> Confusion arises because ‘Rom’ or ‘Roma’ has also long been the name of one specific group of Romanies who live predominantly in southeastern Europe as well as in Austria. In this thesis, I will use the term ‘Romanies’ as the plural to refer to people identifying themselves as members of any Romani community, while I refer to the language as ‘Romani’ and use the adjectival form ‘Romani’.

It is important to note that even in writing about a collective Romani identity in opposition to *Gadje* stereotypes, the authors discussed in this thesis maintain a keen awareness of their own identities within that collective group. The Sinti authors such as Franz, Lessing and the Rosenbergs all make a point of identifying their sub-group. Ceija and Karl Stojka identify themselves as Lowara Roma and Stefan Horvath clearly reveals his connection to the Burgenland Roma.<sup>56</sup> These authors definitely want to assert their own diverse identities while making a case for Romanies, as a group, to be respected and recognised in Germany and Austria. Many Romanies refer to themselves as ‘Zigeuner’ or ‘Gypsies’, including the writers whose texts I will be analysing in this thesis. However, because of the negative images and stereotypes associated with these terms, I will use them only when quoting or when writing of Romanies being categorised as ‘Zigeuner’ or ‘Gypsies’.

### 1.2.1 Origins and the Question of Romani Identity

As the authors I discuss in this thesis emphasise that part of their reason for writing is the desire to put forward a more positive picture of ‘*die Roma*’, or Romanies, and to express that they are ‘ganz normale Menschen’,<sup>57</sup> it is important to acknowledge and point out the key issues in the debate surrounding Romani identity in the field of Romani studies. This debate surrounding the discussion of the history and contemporary cultural identity of Romanies in Europe concerns the question of ‘origin’ and group identity.<sup>58</sup> Scholars such as Ian Hancock, Angus Fraser, Donald Kenrick and Yaron Matras support research which suggests the Romani people of Europe have a common origin in India and carry with them a long tradition of cultural and ethnic characteristics with linguistic and historical evidence.<sup>59</sup> Other scholars argue that ‘Gypsy’ identity is not a matter of biology or descent, but is rather a matter of social

<sup>55</sup>cf. Gilad Margalit and Yaron Matras, ‘Gypsies in Germany — German Gypsies? Identity and Politics of Sinti and Roma in Germany’, in *The Roma: a minority in Europe: historical, political and social perspectives*, ed. by Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest and NY: Central European UP, 2007), pp. 103-116.

<sup>56</sup>See Dieter Halwachs, ‘Roma and Romani in Austria’, *Romani Studies*, 15 2 (2005), 145-173 for the implications of these identifications (p. 152).

<sup>57</sup>Lessing, *Versteckt*, p. 14. See also Karl Stojka, *Zuhause*, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup>See Peter Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Identity in Contemporary Central Europe* (NY and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), pp. 13-20.

<sup>59</sup>See Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome. An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* (Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1987); Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1995); Donald Kenrick and Gratton Puxon, *Gypsies under the Swastika* (Hatfield: U of Hertfordshire P, 1995); Yaron Matras, ‘The Role of Language’, in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of Romanies / Gypsies in European Cultures* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2005), pp. 53-78.

construction resulting from 'classification struggles involving both classifiers and those classified as Roma'.<sup>60</sup> For example, Judith Okely suggests that Gypsies are connected through the way they have been categorised by others, e.g. in having chosen 'to reject wage-labor rather than be proletarianised', they were then classified as a group because they shared this common choice.<sup>61</sup> Further, Wim Willems argues against the idea of the historical diaspora, positing that the idea of the common Indian origin was a fabrication of the work of 'gypsiologists', most notably Heinrich Grellmann in the late 18th century, and is critical of the view that 'Gypsies' 'constitute a single people with a number of specific characteristics of their own'.<sup>62</sup> However, these arguments present a problem to those who would want to see Romani identity as having a common linguistic, cultural and ethnic heritage and continues the act of Romani identity being determined by their interactions with others, rather than their own self-definitions. David Mayall, who also argues in favour of the 'Gypsy' as a social construct, has said that the 'key point of contention remains that of origins'.<sup>63</sup>

I would like to acknowledge the sensitivity of this debate within the broad context of Romani studies and to note that the authors I have chosen to discuss in this thesis do themselves offer their own definitions of their individual identities as well as of the collective identities to which they feel they belong. I will explore the identities these authors present in their texts in the individual chapters in this thesis. These Romani writers all make specific references to their own particular Romani community and heritage (Sinti in the case of the German writers and Rom<sup>64</sup> in the case of the Austrian writers), while recognising that the Sinti and Rom communities belong to a larger group, *die Roma*, the Romanies. All Romani communities, they note in their texts, have their roots in India. Their assertions of Romani identity can be seen as part of a movement that began after the Holocaust and continued to gain momentum. In Germany, various committees were founded by Romanies themselves as early as the 1950's, initially to address concern over reparation claims; later these small committees expanded into larger groups that are still active and influential today, including the *Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma* in Heidelberg.<sup>65</sup> The debates surrounding these issues are of a sensitive nature and this, along with the not-unrelated question of how Romanies were victimised in the Holocaust has resulted in the regrettable delay of important work that could be done, for example the delay in

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<sup>60</sup>Vermeersch, p. 13.

<sup>61</sup>Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), pp. 13-14.

<sup>62</sup>Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, trans. by Dan Bloch (London: Cass, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>63</sup>David Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth Century Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), pp. 78-80.

<sup>64</sup>*Rom* or *Roma* groups are also subdivided into different tribes, for example, Kalderash and Lowara. Austria is home to many Romanies who identify themselves as Burgenland-Roma and Lowara, who came to Austria from Hungary; this can be noted in their names which are often based in the Hungarian language, e.g. Horvath. See Dieter Halwachs, 'Roma and Romani in Austria', *Romani Studies*, 15 2 (2005), 145-173. Here, p. 146.

<sup>65</sup>Fraser, p. 315. For more information on the *Zentralrat*, currently run by Romani Rose, who has been active in creating exhibitions and arguing for recognition of the Romani persecution in the Holocaust and the new memorial in Berlin, see their website: (<http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de>).

the building of the memorial of the Romani Holocaust in Berlin.<sup>66</sup> In terms of scholarship in the field of Romani studies, efforts have been made to document a varied but coherent past and also a cohesive Romani identity.<sup>67</sup>

### 1.2.2 Romani Culture, Tradition, Experience

There are many ‘Romani traditions’ that are part of traditional Romani culture, though the degree to which they are practiced varies considerably within this diverse ethnic group.<sup>68</sup> Traditional culture is made up of a number of different practices and customs. As Brigitte Mihok and Peter Widmann note: ‘Befragt man Sinti und Roma danach, was ihre Kultur ausmache, erhält man verschiedene, mitunter widersprüchliche Auskünfte’.<sup>69</sup> For this reason, I highlight here customs and practices which have been noted to be generally binding for all Romani communities;<sup>70</sup> these traditions and customs can be read to varying degrees in the texts I discuss in this thesis and so it is important to acknowledge them here. Kirsten Martins-Heuß observed that Romani life and culture is structured according to ‘a special ordering principle, that of ritual purity’.<sup>71</sup> She goes on to say that

ritual purity — the ideal condition of social order — must be re-created again and again by means of ‘correct’ or honourable behavior on the part of the members of this ethnic group. This circumstance also serves to remind us that Gypsy culture cannot be conceived of in static terms: on the contrary, this culture, in all its forms and patterns, constitutes a dynamic and living response to existential problems and an attempt to cope with the demands of everyday life.<sup>72</sup>

This ‘dynamic and living response’ is one that I will address in this thesis as the events of the Holocaust disrupted and weakened Romani cultural traditions and demanded a way of collectively dealing with the taboos that had been broken.

The Romani ordering and structuring according to ritual purity applies to all areas of life, including hygiene, the preparation of food and the interaction between the sexes.<sup>73</sup> Two main ordering systems regulate the division of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’. The first, termed by Judith Okely as ‘inner/outer body symbolism’ has to do with hygiene, preparing food, and the division of the

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<sup>66</sup>See Michael Zimmermann, ‘The Berlin Memorial for the murdered Sinti and Roma: Problems and points for discussion’, *Romani Studies* 5, 17 1 (2007), 1-30, for an overview of this situation and the controversies that surround it.

<sup>67</sup>See, for example, Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies*, and Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*.

<sup>68</sup>Reemtsma, p. 60-63.

<sup>69</sup>Mihok and Widmann, ‘Sinti und Roma als Feindbilder’, p. 43.

<sup>70</sup>Kirsten Martins-Heuß, ‘Reflections on the Collective Identity of German Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) after National Socialism’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 4 2 (1989), 193-211. Here, p. 203. Hereafter cited as ‘Reflections on Collective Identity’.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische “Lösung der Zigeunerfrage”* (Hamburg: Christians, 1996), p. 73.



home into pure and impure spheres.<sup>74</sup> One notable example of this is the separation of the toilet from the rest of the living area; it will not be located inside a Romani caravan. Non-Romanies are categorised as inherently impure because they do not follow any purity rules; Romanies therefore would risk contamination in offering them food and drink — if they choose to do so, they must keep the dishes and utensils used by non-Romanies separate and store them in a separate place afterwards.<sup>75</sup> Places of birth and death are considered to be impure and Martins-Heuß observes that ‘no Gypsy can live at such a site if he wishes to preserve his honour’.<sup>76</sup> The second ordering system regulates contact between men and women, assigning separate roles for males and females in Romani society and identifying the female body as impure and a source of contamination.<sup>77</sup> Reemtsma notes a ‘starke Trennung der männlichen und weiblichen Lebenssphären’<sup>78</sup> This division of male and female roles and separate spheres of life is evident in the narratives I discuss, where the writers rarely incorporate interactions with the opposite sex into their texts. The destruction of Romani ordering systems in the concentration camps and the resulting ‘contamination’ and loss of honour which took place is particularly relevant to the experiences described in the accounts I discuss in this thesis.

Mihok and Widmann note that two common answers received when asking Romanies what characterises their own culture were the importance of family unity and the Romani language.<sup>79</sup> Language is seen as a protective measure against influences from other communities. The importance of family among Romani communities is also highlighted by Zimmermann: ‘Bei Sinti und Roma nahmen sich die Individuen nicht primär als Einzelne wahr. Es war vielmehr das System der Verwandtschaft, das ihnen Sicherheit verlieh’.<sup>80</sup> For Romanies, the concept of family is generally structured around two or three generations, where older people are dominant and more respected. The close connection between family members can also influence their choice of economic sustenance, with trades that could be carried out as a group and that would permit the family to stay/travel together preferred. In addition, the family bond entails a strong devotion to those family members who have died and a belief in these relatives’ ongoing influence on the living.<sup>81</sup> Therefore ostracism from the family group, which is often the result of the violation of purity codes and the corresponding loss of honour, is seen as the harshest of punishments.

The ‘dynamic and living response’ of Romani culture to ‘existential problems’ noted by Martins-Heuß is evident in the texts discussed in this thesis. In particular, certain traditions

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<sup>74</sup>Judith Okely makes her observations about English Gypsies in *Traveller Gypsies*, but in ‘Reflections on Collective Identity’, Martins-Heuß notes similarities between Okely’s and her own observations of Sinti and Roma cultural practices in Germany (pp. 204-207). Similar observations are also noted by Reemtsma, pp. 61-62.

<sup>75</sup>Martins-Heuß, ‘Reflections on Collective Identity’, p. 205.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid. See also Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 73.

<sup>78</sup>Reemtsma, p. 61.

<sup>79</sup>Mihok and Widmann, p. 43.

<sup>80</sup>Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 73.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

have been used by some of the writers in a new context, that of the Holocaust; specific cultural traditions of Romanies were violated in the concentration camps of the Third Reich, resulting in further humiliation, shame and guilt in its aftermath. In their discussion of these specific cultural markers in their texts, these writers authenticate the narratives as specifically Romani. For example, Martins-Heuß writes that in Romani culture ‘a dying person must never, if at all possible, be left alone’. In *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, Ceija Stojka remembers herself sitting with her little brother Ossi before he dies; she also remembers her mother sitting all day with the body of a small boy who had been killed in Bergen-Belsen (*Verborgenen*, pp. 26, 57).

### 1.2.3 As the *Gadje* see them

The word *Gadje* is the most widespread word across the various dialects of the Romani language used to describe non-Romanies.<sup>82</sup> Despite differences among Romani communities, a unifying link has always been a clear sense of the distinction between Romanies and non-Romanies. In Germany, this can be traced back to the scorn with which Romanies were categorised as ‘other’ in society from their arrival there in the early fifteenth century.<sup>83</sup> In the following two sections, I will explore the various images of the ‘Zigeuner’ in German-speaking society and literature and the origins of these images and stereotypes; these provide important insights into the social and cultural environment in which the Romani authors I will be discussing in this thesis wrote their texts.

#### 1.2.3.1 Gypsiology and the ‘Zigeuner’ Stereotype in German-Speaking Society

Nicholas Saul, in *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century*, traces ‘the representation of the Gypsy in German culture through the medium of literature and the discipline of anthropology’.<sup>84</sup> He notes the first anthropological works written about the *Zigeuner*, which reflected and perpetuated the prevalent attitudes towards these Romanies in Germany. The idea of Romanies being at home everywhere and, at the same time, nowhere, was first written in Jacob Thomasius’s *Dissertatio de Cingaris* in 1671.<sup>85</sup> In this document, Thomasius also wrongly established their ‘origin’ as Egypt. The next pieces of influential writing came from Johann Rüdiger and Heinrich Grellmann. Rüdiger established that the Romani language was Indian in origin and, in 1782, finally dispelled the notion of Egyptian origins.<sup>86</sup> Grellmann, in his highly influential dissertation on ‘Zigeuner’ was thus able to identify these ‘mysterious people’ as ‘Orientals’ who have their roots in north-western

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<sup>82</sup>Fraser, p. 8.

<sup>83</sup>Reemtsma, p. 52.

<sup>84</sup>Nicholas Saul *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Legenda, 2007). Here, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup>This was translated into German in 1702 (Fraser, p. 187).

<sup>86</sup>See Matras, ‘The Role of Language’, p. 57.

India.<sup>87</sup> In his work, Grellmann portrayed the Gypsies as a lazy, illiterate *Naturvolk* governed by sensuality, who only used their minds to ‘satisfy basic animalistic drives’.<sup>88</sup> This label of laziness was particularly damning in light of the Protestant work ethic of the time.<sup>89</sup> These observations set the tone for how Gypsies were viewed in German society and subsequently portrayed in German language literature. Grellmann also consolidated the Romantic stereotype of the ‘Zigeuner’ as ‘aesthetically beautiful’ when he observed ‘ihre weißen Zähne, ihr langes schwarzes Haar, auf das sie sehr halten, [...]’ are ‘allerdings Stücke, die der Geschmack des Europäers, mit ziemlicher Einmüthigkeit, unter die Eigenschaften leiblicher Schönheit setzen wird’.<sup>90</sup> Grellmann’s ‘Zigeuner’ were not only physically beautiful, but also artistically gifted, their female dancers erotically provocative, and their musicians exceptionally talented, particularly as violinists.<sup>91</sup>

The work of the early cultural anthropologists, or ‘Gypsiologists’ is useful here as it provides the background for the stereotypes with which Romanies within German-speaking society have had to contend. Saul writes that ‘the Gypsy girl’s erotic dance and the Gypsy man’s virtuoso violin improvisation will henceforth remain compensatory dominants of the Gypsy image in German (and European) culture, always co-ordinated with its equal and opposite image of the Gypsy’s shocking abjection’.<sup>92</sup> The images presented in Grellmann’s text, which was to remain the authority on Romanies throughout the 19th century, established the double-edged sword in the stereotyping and active prejudice against Romanies in German history; these images provided writers with the handy character of the criminal or the seductress in the form of the ‘Zigeuner’ or ‘Zigeunerin’.<sup>93</sup>

### 1.2.3.2 The ‘Zigeuner’ Image in German-language Literature

Examining the role of the ‘Zigeuner’ in German-language literature is essential to understanding the urgent need for Romani self-representation. The roles of both the ‘Romantic outsider’ and the ‘criminal’ were often filled by the ‘Zigeuner’. Indeed, the presence of the ‘Zigeuner’ in Germany itself functioned as a way of exploring German identity through the portrayal of these quintessential ‘outsiders’ who were at the same time a common and established presence within

<sup>87</sup>Saul, p. 5. For further discussion on the problematic nature of Grellmann’s research, see Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), pp. 22-92. For contemporary linguistic research on the Indian origin of Romanies, see Matras, ‘The Role of Language’, pp. 53-78.

<sup>88</sup>Willems, p. 52.

<sup>89</sup>Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische “Lösung der Zigeunerfrage”*, (Hamburg: Christians, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>90</sup>Quotd. in Saul, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup>Saul, p. 7.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup>Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 67. For an interesting parallel to the cultural ‘othering’ of Jews at the same period of time, see Sander Gilman *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Cornell UP, 1985). On the Jewish ‘seductress’ in 19th century literature, see Florian Krobb, *Die Schöne Jüdin: Jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen: Niemeyer [Condition Judaica], 1993).

the German landscape. The 'Zigeuner' featured in the writing of Friedrich Hebbel, Wilhelm Raabe and Gottfried Keller, who presented them as living an enviable 'free' life in the midst of the natural beauty of the German heartland — and in Orientalist terms as the primitives who needed to be schooled and taught how to live upstanding lives.<sup>94</sup> The casting of Romanies as the outsiders within German society provided a useful way of exploring German identity and the concept of *Heimat*.<sup>95</sup> With the onset of industrialisation, the perceived Romantic lifestyle of the carefree 'Zigeuner', at one with nature and possessing an inherent simplicity, presented an image of nostalgia for life before the intrusion of industrialisation and the purity of the provincial *Heimat*.<sup>96</sup> However, the image of the 'criminal Zigeuner' provided a justification for the rules and progression of an advancing society.<sup>97</sup> As Mihok and Widmann observe, 'In der Vorstellungswelt der Bevölkerungsmehrheit verkörpert der 'Zigeuner' Gefahr und Idylle zugleich'.<sup>98</sup>

Claudia Breger's study, *Ortlosigkeit des Fremden: 'Zigeunerinnen' and 'Zigeuner' in der deutschsprachigen Literatur um 1800*, deals with the function of the image of the quintessential stranger in German language literature and discusses the various images and concepts of the 'Zigeuner' and 'Zigeunerin' as liars, child snatchers, cannibals, thieves and Romani women as witches or sexual temptresses. Almut Hille's *Identitätskonstruktionen: Die 'Zigeunerin' in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts* explores German-language literature in the twentieth century, again drawing the connection to the threat of *Heimat* posed by these strangers who were at the same time such familiar faces within the German or Austrian *Heimat*.<sup>99</sup> Romanies have also been demonised in *Zigeunermärchen* that go back to oral narratives of Sinti and Roma. Solms questions the existence of these *Zigeunermärchen* by asking: 'What is the explanation for the fact that we, the researchers into and connoisseurs of fairy tales, have not queried this, indeed not found it? Perhaps the demonic image of the Gypsy which is to be

<sup>94</sup>cf. Saul, pp. 60-86. See, in particular, pp. 64-75 for Saul's discussion of Raabe's *Die Kinder von Finkenrode*, which presents a significantly subversive view of the Romantic discourse of the time by reflecting a more realistic view of Romani life; in Raabe's novel the Romani family has to deal with being forcibly settled, constantly policed and fighting for *Heimatsberechtigung*.

<sup>95</sup>Saul, p. 79. Deborah Epstein Nord traces similar associations in Britain and British literature where the image of the Gypsy bound to nature and free from society's rules became the scope for the majority to project what they desired and feared: people who were removed from mainstream society and regimanted identity. See Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>96</sup>See Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream: regional loyalties and national identity in German culture, 1890-1990* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>97</sup>On images of the 'Zigeuner' in German language literature and society, see Daniel Strauss, 'Anti-Gypsyism in German Society and Literature', *Sinti and Roma in German-speaking Society and Literature*, ed. and trans. by Susan Tebbutt, (NY, Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 81-90. In his article, Strauss draws connections between the history of anti-semitic images in literature and anti-Gypsyism in literature. See also: Anita Awosusi *Zigeunerbilder in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Heidelberg: Dokumentationszentrum Sinti und Roma, 2000); Wilhelm Solms, 'On the Demonising of Jews and Gypsies in Fairy Tales', *Sinti and Roma in German-speaking Society and Literature*, ed. and trans. by Susan Tebbutt (NY and Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 91-106.

<sup>98</sup>Mihok and Widmann, p. 42.

<sup>99</sup>Almut Hille, *Identitätskonstruktionen: Die 'Zigeunerin' in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2005), pp. 227-233.

found in the fairy tales also corresponds to our own prejudiced view’?<sup>100</sup> The perpetuation of damaging stereotypes has helped stifle Romani self-representations, which might have worked to counter the myriad images produced by ‘outsiders’. As Claudia Breger suggests,

the exclusion of Roma and Sinti from the dominant culture’s institutions of education has prevented the emergence of an extensive body of self-representations and the enormous quantity of ‘Gypsy’ texts by non-‘Gypsy’ authors attests to the degree to which racial stereotypes are unaffected by differences in genre, political stance or historical change.<sup>101</sup>

Hancock writes, ‘the question of what Romani literature is, whether oral or written, should be addressed, for if it includes the plethora of material with Gypsy characters or Gypsy themes, then most of its writers aren’t Roma at all’.<sup>102</sup> As I will demonstrate below, Romanies have long been defined by ‘racial’ stereotypes which have been affirmed by and spread through literature and scholarly texts. The stereotypes have been perpetuated through literary images and harmful, if sometimes well intentioned, studies of ‘Gypsy’ or *Zigeuner* life.<sup>103</sup> From these images and their potency in non-Romani society, comes the notion of fighting literature with literature. Much secondary literature has been written about the Roma, but as Eve Rosenhaft points out, ‘nearly all historical Studies of Roma and Sinti in Germany are in fact histories of anti-Gypsyism’.<sup>104</sup> Thus, Romani writing becomes a tool to construct a new, more accurate identity through the language and written tradition of the non-Romani majority in their home countries. Hancock writes ‘on the literary front, *achel o por maj zoralo e xanrrestar*, the pen remains always mightier than the sword, and it is through the written word [...] that the battle is also being fought’.<sup>105</sup>

#### 1.2.4 Romani *Erzählkunst*

Stories have long played an important part in the lives of many Romani families throughout Europe and existed as a way of telling about what other families had encountered on the

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<sup>100</sup>Solms, ‘On the Demonising of Jews and Gypsies in Fairy Tales’, p. 106.

<sup>101</sup>Claudia Breger, ‘Understanding the “Other”? Communication, History and Narration in Margriet de Moor’s Hertog van Egypte (1996)’, in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of “Gypsies”/Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2004), pp. 131-145. Here, p. 131. Hereafter cited as ‘Understanding the “Other”’. Noteworthy exceptions to the perpetuation of these stereotypes within German language writing include: Luise Rinser, *Wer wirft den Stein? Zigeuner sein in Deutschland: eine Anklage* (Stuttgart: Edition Weitbrecht, 1985); Erich Hackl, *Abschied von Sidonie* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1989); Ludwig Laher, *Herzfleiscentartung* (Innsbruck: Haymon, 2001) and *Und nehmen was kommt* (Innsbruck: Haymon, 2007). While these works do not completely avoid stereotypes, they do present other aspects of Romani life and address the contemporary situation of Romanies in Germany and Austria.

<sup>102</sup>Hancock, *Roads of the Roma*, p. 11.

<sup>103</sup>See, for example, Isabel Fonseca’s popular study of Romanies in Europe based on her time living with them, *Bury Me Standing. The Gypsies and their Journey* (NY: Random House, 1996) in which she states: ‘Gypsies lie. They lie a lot - more often and more inventively than other people’ (p. 15).

<sup>104</sup>Eve Rosenhaft, ‘A Photographer and his “Victims” 1934-1964: Reconstructing a Shared Experience of the Romani Holocaust’, in *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of “Gypsies”/Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. by Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2004), pp. 178-207. Here, p. 181.

<sup>105</sup>Hancock, *Roads of the Roma*, p. 20.

road ahead, personal histories, or histories of the Romani people. Walter Benjamin, in his essay, 'Der Erzähler', makes a distinction between two ideal types of storytellers: the traveller, 'der von weither kommt', and the farmer 'der im Land geblieben ist und dessen Geschichten und Überlieferungen kennt'.<sup>106</sup> Wilhelm Solms, in an article on Sinti and Roma *Erzählkunst*, writes that 'Volksgruppen wie die Sinti und Roma, die eine Zeit lang mit den ansässigen Volksgruppen zusammenlebten und dann weiterzogen, besaßen naturgemäß einen großen Schatz an Erzählungen'.<sup>107</sup> Romanies have no written history, but have kept stories of ancestors and travels alive through the act of storytelling. Family, friends, and neighbours would gather to listen to fairy tales or other narratives. Milena Huebschmanová, who has herself recorded and collected many stories by Romanies in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, describes listening to the stories of a community of Slovakian Roma where she was a guest.

Man versammelte sich spät in die Nacht hinein. Gute Erzähler waren sehr geschätzt, man veranstaltete gar Wettbewerbe im Erzählen. [...] Derjenige Erzähler besaße das höchste Ansehen, der ein möglichst langes Märchen erzählen könnte. Das längste Märchen, das ich selbst gehört habe, ist mir über zwei Tage hinweg erzählt worden, und als ich es vom Tonband auf Papier übertrug, kam ich auf 105 eng beschriebene Seiten.<sup>108</sup>

Mozes Heinschink has recorded stories from Romanies in Austria, eastern Europe, and Turkey over many decades, resulting in hundreds of recordings of Romani oral tradition.<sup>109</sup> Oral tradition plays a key role in family tradition in its inherent definition as a communal act. It is how family values / histories / personal stories are preserved from generation to generation. To be exposed to these stories is to become the privileged guest of the storytellers and to gain insight into their lives. References to this kind of oral tradition and storytelling can be found in texts by Philomena Franz, Ceija Stojka, Alfred Lessing, Karl Stojka and Otto Rosenberg, who all lament the loss of this tradition and way of life.

Reinhold Lagrene writes about the importance of family to oral tradition and vice versa, noting 'die Familie ist Trägerin der Sprache und Kultur. Dieser Bindung an die Familie verdanken wir all das, was wir bis heute, also nahezu eintausend Jahre lang, an Überlieferung erhalten haben. Gemeinschaft fördert und fordert das Erzählen'.<sup>110</sup> He emphasises the particu-

<sup>106</sup>Walter Benjamin, 'Der Erzähler' in *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften I* (Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 385-410. Here, pp. 385-386.

<sup>107</sup>Wilhelm Solms, 'Erzählen als Kunst', in *Zigeunerbilder in der deutschsprachigen Literatur: Tagung in der Universität Marburg vom 5-7. Mai, 1994*, ed. by Wilhelm Solms and Daniel Strauß (Heidelberg: Dokumentations und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 1995), pp. 109-126. Here, p. 115.

<sup>108</sup>Qutd. in Reemtsma, p. 76. See also Dieter Halwachs, Mozes F. Heinschink and Christiane Fennesz-Juhasz, 'Kontinuität und Wandel: Stellenwert von Sprache und Musik bei Roma und Sinti in Österreich', *Music, Language and Literature of the Roma and Sinti*, ed. by Max Baumann (Berlin: VWB, 2000), pp. 99-153.

<sup>109</sup>I would like to thank Mozes Heinschink, linguist and member of the governing board of the Romano Centro in Vienna, for this information.

<sup>110</sup>Reinhold Lagrene, 'Mündliche Erzählkunst als Volkskultur — Betrachtungen und Innensicht' in *Zigeunerbilder in der deutschsprachigen Literatur: Tagung in der Universität Marburg vom 5-7. Mai, 1994*, ed. by Wilhelm Solms and Daniel Strauß (Dokumentations und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma: Heidelberg, 1995), pp. 127-148. Here, p. 132. Lagrene argues that oral tradition, *Erzählen*, has a specific and special significance to

lar connection that Romanies have with oral tradition, highlighting their strong sense of family and community, their respect for their elders as carriers of the older stories and experienced storytellers, of the specificity of *telling* history to younger generations rather than reading a history book, as a way of overcoming difficulty and facing oppression, a method for instructing children on how to behave and giving them direction, and, lastly, the mixing of fact and fiction in the stories. These aspects of oral storytelling that Lagrene outlines in his article can be found to some degree in the written texts I have chosen to discuss in this thesis. From Franz's impulse to combat the bullying her son faced at school by speaking to the children about racism and the Holocaust, to Ceija Stojka's highlighting of her aunt's storytelling abilities, to Otto Rosenberg's respect for his mother and grandmother, to the addressing of traumatic memories and communicating of history — all of these details can be read as traces of an oral storytelling tradition which have been translated into the written word. How, then, is the oral tradition different from the written and why is the written storytelling tradition coming into Romani culture in Germany and Austria at this point in time?

The Holocaust presents itself as one possible answer to this question. Lagrene asks the question:

Wie aber die Erfahrungen des Holocaust in Geschichten verarbeiten? Sie können nicht ausgemalt werden, nicht schrecklicher, unheimlicher, bedrohlicher, quälender, ja nicht einmal bizarrer und verrückter dargestellt werden. Sie waren all dies und sie waren jenseits aller menschlichen Wirklichkeit und Vorstellung. Es ist ein eigentümlicher Gedanke, daß möglicherweise auch dies: das sich immer wieder vordrängende Erinnern an den Holocaust, zum Absterben des Erzählens im Sinne von 'Geschichten erzählen' beigetragen haben könnte.<sup>111</sup>

The break in oral tradition, which was the result of the loss of so many lives and, with them, the loss of their stories, could have been a factor in the new urgency to record memories and stories in a format that could be published and preserved. Kirsten Martins-Heuß posits that the very preservation of Romani culture was at stake and argues that the Holocaust resulted in a long period of silence within Romani families after their release from the camps: this was the only way they could come to terms with the humiliations they endured and the violations of their cultural codes they were forced to commit, particularly in relation to purity codes.<sup>112</sup> However, Lagrene notes that within his own family he was presented with a different view of the Holocaust through the stories of his parents than the one presented in most history books, one that took into account the humiliations his relatives faced in the concentration camps: 'im Erzählen durchleben unsere Menschen wieder und wieder die schlimmsten Demütigungen und ihre gezielt betriebene Entehrung, mit der die Nazis sie brechen und ihren Zusammenhalt

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Romani, his own, culture.

<sup>111</sup>Lagrene, p. 135.

<sup>112</sup>See Martins-Heuß, 'Reflections on the Collective Identity', pp. 207-209 on the silence of Roma regarding their victimisation in the Holocaust and the consequences to group tradition and memory.

zerstören wollten'.<sup>113</sup> Solms points out that *Erzählen* as a literature 'sich nicht in Abgrenzung, sondern in Anlehnung an das mündliche Erzählen entwickelt'.<sup>114</sup> This mix between the older oral tradition and the new tradition of registering the experience of the Holocaust in written (as well as oral) form indicates a continuity with older traditions which pre-date the Holocaust, despite the fact that the Holocaust has widely been presented as or understood to be a historical caesura.

### 1.2.5 The Romani Holocaust in Germany and Austria

The victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust has now been well documented. Michael Zimmermann's *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische 'Lösung der Zigeunerfrage'*, in particular, provides a comprehensive and thorough account of the persecution and mass annihilation of Romanies in the Third Reich. Romanies were subject first to restrictions on their freedoms, expulsions from schools and increasingly violent policing. In 1938, writes Zimmermann, 'fand [die enge Kooperation zwischen Kriminalpolizei und Rassenhygienikern (RKPA)] ihren Ausdruck im Runderlaß "Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage". Er verlangte explizit eine "Regelung der Zigeunerfrage aus dem Wesen dieser Rasse hinaus"'.<sup>115</sup> Already before this document was released, *Zigeuner* had been targeted as part of a 'vorbeugende Verbrechensbekämpfung', carried out by the RKPA against 'Asoziale'; German and Austrian Romanies were arrested and interned in concentration camps as part of this action. In the *Zigeunerlagern* such as Marzahn, near Berlin, and Lackenbach in Burgenland, Austria, they faced cramped and unsanitary conditions, forced labour, beatings, starvation and disease.<sup>116</sup> In 1943, Himmler ordered the deportation of *Zigeuner* to Auschwitz in a decree known as the 'Auschwitz-Erlaß'.<sup>117</sup> In Auschwitz-Birkenau, Romanies were imprisoned in the *Zigeunerlager*, which was set up as a *Familienlager* where men, women and children were interned together. Though this might be seen as an advantage, it reflected no consideration for the fact that Romani purity codes, which required separation of male and female roles in daily life.<sup>118</sup> In Auschwitz and other

<sup>113</sup>Lagrene, p. 135.

<sup>114</sup>Solms, 'Erzählen als Kunst', p. 120.

<sup>115</sup>Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 80.

<sup>116</sup>On Lackenbach, see Erika Thurner, *National Socialism and Gypsies in Austria* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP, 1998), pp. 42-101. Please note that I have decided to use the translated version of this text because it has been extensively updated in cooperation with Erika Thurner. It was originally published in German as *Nationalsozialismus und Zigeuner in Österreich* (Vienna: Geyer Edition, 1983). For a fictionalised account based on Austrian 'Arbeitslager' at Sant Pantaleon in Austria, see Ludwig Laher, *Herzfleischartung* (2001). On Marzahn and other *Zigeunerlager*, see Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 93-100.

<sup>117</sup>See Gilad Margalit, *Die Nachkriegsdeutschen und 'ihre Zigeuner': Die Behandlung der Sinti und Roma im Schatten von Auschwitz*, trans. by Matthias Schmidt and David Ajchenrand (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), p. 71. In this document, Himmler excluded some Romani groups from deportation. 'Pure-blooded' *Zigeuner* were considered Aryan and therefore free from threat. See also Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 297-304 on the circumstances surrounding this decree.

<sup>118</sup>Martins-Heuß, 'Reflections on Collective Identity', p. 207. Eve Rosenhaft, 'Das Geschlecht des Misstrauens. NS-Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma, geschlechterhistorisch', *Forum Wissenschaft* 1 (2006) <http://www.bdwi.de/forum/archiv/uebersicht/115538.html> [accessed 8 May 2006]. Hereafter cited as 'Geschlecht



concentration camps such as Ravensbrück, Oranienburg, Buchenwald, Natzweiler-Struthof, Flossenbürg and Bergen-Belsen, Romanies were murdered in horrific conditions and suffered forced sterilisations, gruesome medical experiments carried out by Mengele and others, starvation, torture and disease.<sup>119</sup> On the night of August 2, 1944, 2,897 Romanies were gassed when the *Zigeunerlager* at Birkenau was liquidated.<sup>120</sup> The total number of Romanies murdered in the Third Reich is impossible to be given accurately, but estimates run from 200,000 - 500,000, including those killed by *Einsatzgruppen* in Eastern Europe.<sup>121</sup>

### 1.2.6 Remembering the Victims

Another debate important to acknowledge in the reading of the texts I have chosen surrounds the historical representation of the Romani Holocaust, known in Romani as the *Porrajmos*, the great devouring. Sybil Milton has stated that Romanies were targets of genocide during National Socialism:

The Nazi genocide, popularly known as the Holocaust, can be defined as the mass murder of human beings because they belonged to a biologically defined group. [...] The Nazi regime applied a consistent and inclusive policy of extermination — based on heredity — only against three groups of human beings: the handicapped, Jews and Gypsies. [...] They were selected because they existed, and neither loyalty to the German state, adherence to fascist ideology nor contribution to the war effort could alter the determination of the Nazi regime to exterminate them.<sup>122</sup>

This debate is also addressed in Gilad Margalit's study. Historians such as Yehuda Bauer and Guenter Lewy have argued against Milton's stance and that of Romani Rose and the *Zentralrat der deutschen Sinti und Roma*, asserting that, though the Romanies were oppressed and sporadically murdered, they could not be said to have been systematically annihilated as were the Jews.<sup>123</sup> Lewy writes that

Nazi policy toward the Gypsies lacked the kind of single-minded fanaticism that characterised the murderous assault upon the Jews. Entire categories of Gypsies, such as the 'socially adjusted' and the 'sedentary', were generally given more lenient treatment. The Gypsies were considered a 'nuisance' and a 'plague' but not a major threat to the German people, and that is why their treatment differed from that of the Jews.<sup>124</sup>

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des Misstrauens'.

<sup>119</sup>Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 295-365.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid, p. 342.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid, p. 381. See also Wolfgang Wippermann, *Wie die Zigeuner: Antisemitismus und Antiziganismus im Vergleich* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1997), p. 167.

<sup>122</sup>Sybil Milton, 'Gypsies and the Holocaust' (an exchange with Yehuda Bauer), *History Teacher*, 25 (1992), 515-21. Here, p. 516. Wippermann, in *Wie die Zigeuner* similarly sees the extermination of the *Zigeuner* in the concentration camps as running on a parallel to the extermination of the Jews. Donald Kenrick and Gratton Puxon confirm this view of Gypsies as the victims of genocide in *Gypsies under the Swastika* (1995).

<sup>123</sup>For an overview of these debates, see Zimmermann, 'The Berlin Memorial', p. 11.

<sup>124</sup>Gunther Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 225.

These debates are still alive and relevant to how the Romani Holocaust is remembered.<sup>125</sup>

The writers I discuss in this thesis make statements within their texts which address the complexities of this debate and seek to establish the Romani collective as one that is contrary to the 'asocial' and 'criminal' labels they were given by *rassenbiologische Forscher*, most notably Dr Robert Ritter and Eva Justin.<sup>126</sup> These labels were later used as a reason for denying Romanies restitution. Wippermann writes that the West German judges and the *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* did not recognise the seriousness of the differentiation between pure-blooded Zigeuner and 'Mischlinge' and the racial categorisations of these made by Robert Ritter and Eva Justin:

Übersehen wurde dabei einmal, daß die Sinti und Roma keineswegs 'Asoziale' und 'Kriminelle' waren, zweitens, daß für die Kriminalbiologen auch 'asoziales' und 'kriminelles' Verhalten vererbbar und 'rassisch' bedingt war, und schließlich drittens, daß es mit rechtsstaatlichen Vorstellungen kaum vereinbar ist, Menschen nur deshalb ohne Urteil in Konzentrationslager zu sperren und zu ermorden, weil sie als 'asozial' eingestuft wurden.<sup>127</sup>

The labels of 'asocial' and the category of 'criminal' contributed greatly to the long delay in official recognition of the Romani Holocaust.

Gilad Margalit documents the delay in recognition of the Romanies as victims in the Holocaust after the end of the war in *Die Nachkriegsdeutschen und 'ihre Zigeuner'*.<sup>128</sup> Romanies were long excluded from being recognised as victims and being allowed to claim reparations. Further, Margalit addresses the attitudes of the courts in the trials of those who perpetrated the mass murder of the Romanies. Robert Ritter and Eva Justin were both absolved of any wrong-doing by the courts. Margalit writes that

in beiden Ermittlungsverfahren maß die Staatsanwaltschaft den Aussagen der Verfolger (Ritter, Justin, Ritters Institutskollegen sowie Vertretern der Kriminalpolizei) stärkeres Gewicht als den Aussagen der Opfer. Bei den Ermittlungen gegen Ritter zog die Staatsanwaltschaft die Gerichtsfähigkeit der Aussagen von Zigeunern grundsätzlich in Zweifel, indem sie einem fachlichen Gutachten Ritters folgte.<sup>129</sup>

In Austria, Thurner notes that there was little interest in the fate of 'its' Romanies in the Holocaust. 'Postwar society, at least its majority, had little interest in admitting its guilt toward this persecuted minority', she writes.<sup>130</sup> This lack of interest perhaps reflected the overall

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<sup>125</sup>Zimmerman, 'The Berlin Memorial', pp. 10-18. On the subject of whether the murder of Romanies in the Holocaust can be classified as 'genocide', see pp. 18-21.

<sup>126</sup>On Robert Ritter's 'Rassenhygienische und bevölkerungsbiologische Forschungsstelle', which was charged with dealing with the 'Zigeunerfrage' and his colleague, Eva Justin, who gained the trust of Romanies in Germany through learning their language and befriending their children, see Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 139-155.

<sup>127</sup>Wippermann, *Wie die Zigeuner*, p. 188.

<sup>128</sup>Margalit, pp. 127-160.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid, p. 176.

<sup>130</sup>Thurner, p. 128.

landscape of forgetting during that time, which Robert Menasse mentions in *Das Land ohne Eigenschaften*.<sup>131</sup>

The eventual recognition of the Romanies as victims in the Holocaust finally came largely as a result of collective Romani action. In April 1980, a number of Romani activists held a hunger strike at the Dachau concentration camp to bring attention to their victimisation during the Third Reich.<sup>132</sup> In 1985, both the FRG and GDR recognised Romanies as victims of the Holocaust, and placed their victimisation at an equal with that of the Jewish people at an official ceremony.<sup>133</sup> In Austria, due to a small group of Romanies and non-Romanies who protested against past injustices and the pensions denied them, an amendment was finally passed in 1988 for Romani reparations and in December, 1993, Romanies were officially recognised as the sixth ethnic group in Austria. Turner estimates that only one-half to one-third of displaced Romanies from the Burgenland returned from the concentration camps of the Third Reich.<sup>134</sup> She highlights that the fear of facing a renewed bureaucracy in terms of the registering to claim material reparation was too great for most Romanies. She, like Margalit, also emphasises the questionable attitudes of the courts towards Romani victims and notes that 'those who took the path of the courts soon had to realise that the humiliation in the concentration camp was followed by that in the court'.<sup>135</sup> While Sinti and Roma are recognised as 'ethnic groups' in Germany, the fight begun by the Zentralrat in 1995 to be recognised as a national minority has led to a statement by the Bundestag guaranteeing the protection and support of Romani citizens in Germany to engage in German political and cultural life.<sup>136</sup> Zimmermann identifies four main factors for the long silence in regard to the Romani Holocaust: the social position of the Romani minority in Europe, the fact that non-Romanies have few personal contacts with Romanies due to a long history of cultural separation, the small amount of political influence which the advocates of the cause of the persecuted Romanies have, and lastly, the ambiguity for non-Romanies surrounding who Romanies are.<sup>137</sup>

The writing examined in this thesis can, in part, be identified as a result of the unified movement in the last half of the twentieth century for Romanies to be recognised as a minority group and as victims in the Holocaust. In Germany, the Romani rights movement began in direct response to the lack of recognition of Romanies as 'rassisch Verfolgte' in the Holocaust and the lack of aid they received upon returning to their home countries after the war.<sup>138</sup> In 1971, the 'Zentralkomitee der Sinti Westdeutschlands' was founded under the direction of Vinzenz Rose, who, in 1974 invested his own money to build a memorial for Romani victims

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<sup>131</sup>Robert Menasse, *Das Land ohne Eigenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 14-23.

<sup>132</sup>Mihok and Widmann, p. 45.

<sup>133</sup>cf. Margalit, p. 257.

<sup>134</sup>Turner, p. 129.

<sup>135</sup>Turner, p. 128.

<sup>136</sup>See the Zentralrat's website: [www.zentralrat.sintiundroma.de](http://www.zentralrat.sintiundroma.de) [last accessed 4 May, 2009].

<sup>137</sup>Zimmermann, 'The Berlin Memorial' p. 23.

<sup>138</sup>Reemtsma, p. 138.

at Auschwitz-Birkenau. In 1982 'Komitee' joined with smaller local organisations to become what is now known as the *Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma*, centrally based in Heidelberg and under the direction of Romani Rose. Through the efforts of this organisation along with the 'Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker' and their mutual projects, publications and publicity actions, the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust slowly became known.<sup>139</sup>

The narratives explored in this thesis are marked by an urgency to tell what happened, to bear witness, and to preserve memory of the event both for Romanies and for non-Romanies. The imperative to address the threatening environment that continues to surround Romani life in Austria and Germany (and Europe) is evident in their texts. Ceija Stojka writes, 'Ich habe Angst, Auschwitz könnte nur schlafen'.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid, p. 139-140.

<sup>140</sup>See preface of Ceija Stojka, *Bilder und Texte 1989-1995*, ed. P. Meier-Rogan (Vienna: Graphische Kunstanstalt Otto Sares, 1995).

## Chapter 2

# ‘Orte erschaffen’: The Claiming of Space in Writing by Philomena Franz

Philomena Franz was the first Romani to write specifically of her experiences in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. Her autobiographical narrative, entitled *Zwischen Liebe und Hass: ein Zigeunerleben* and first published in 1985,<sup>1</sup> was significant for its account of the atrocities that were inflicted on Romanies during the Second World War. For the past thirty years, Franz has been speaking at schools, universities, and community meetings, emphasising the importance of remembering Auschwitz and its victims. ‘Auschwitz muss bleiben als Mahnmal. Auschwitz darf nicht in Vergessenheit geraten, auch diese schreckliche Zeit nicht’, she says.<sup>2</sup> In 1995, she was honoured with the Bundesverdienstkreuz am Bande and in 1997 she participated in the ‘Goethes Betrifft der Weltliteratur’ Symposium in Weimar. In 2001 she was named ‘Frau Europas 2001’ by the *Europäische Bewegung Deutschland*.<sup>3</sup> These prizes and honours indicate that Philomena Franz has been recognised as an advocate for the acceptance of diversity and Romani rights and for alerting the German public to the victimisation of Romanies during the Third Reich. However, her literary contribution beyond the didactic message that her works attempt to convey has yet to be properly acknowledged. This chapter endeavours to explore the literary quality of Philomena Franz’s autobiography and the *Märchen* included in the 2001 edition of *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* as unique representations of the Holocaust

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<sup>1</sup>Philomena Franz, *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* (Freiburg: Herder, 1985). Two more editions of Franz’s text with Reinhold Lehmann’s afterword were published by Herder in 1986, and 1987; in 1992, *Zwischen Liebe und Hass: ein Zigeunerleben* was published again by Herder with an additional essay by Wolfgang Benz. In 2001, another edition was published: *Zwischen Liebe und Hass: Ein Zigeunerleben* (Rösrath: P. Franz, 2001) which includes the afterword by Lehmann, the essay by Benz and three fairy tales and an essay by Franz. From this point on, I will refer to the 2001 edition of Franz’s book unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup>Petra Löber, ‘Wenn wir hassen, verlieren wir: Ein Leben für Verständigung’, *Freitag* 9 March 2001, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>The ‘Europäische Bewegung Deutschland’ is an initiative of the EU Commission and Parliament awards this prize to someone who has endeavoured to create safe and peaceful cohabitation among EU countries by advocating understanding for other cultures and working to resolve conflicts among people from different cultures. The prize ceremony was held in Berlin and the laudatory speech was given by Wolfgang Thierse, president of the Bundestag. Information from: [http://www.bundestag.de/bic/presse/2001/pz\\_010307a](http://www.bundestag.de/bic/presse/2001/pz_010307a) [accessed 2 March, 2006].

through her working through of these traumatic memories, her expressions of the concept of *Heimat*, her experiences in the camps as a woman, and her bold crossing of traditional genre boundaries.

## 2.1 The Author

Philomena Franz was born in Biberach, Germany in 1922. She comes from a Sinti family of musicians and performers that has lived in Germany for centuries. As a young girl, Franz sang and danced as a member of her family's company. She fondly remembers highlights of this time such as performing at the Lido in Paris and the Wintergarten in Berlin. This life of artistic freedom ended when her family's passports and then their instruments were taken away. Franz remembers the humiliating tests she and her family were subjected to: 'Sie haben unsere Nasen gemessen und die Stärke der Haare'.<sup>4</sup> In 1938 she was taken out of school and forced to work in a munitions factory before, in 1943, she was deported to Auschwitz. After one attempted escape from Ravensbrück, Franz successfully ran away from a camp near Wittenberge in 1945 and managed to stay alive and hidden with the help of a German farmer. When she returned to Germany, she discovered that most other members of her family had been murdered in the concentration camps. Aid was not readily available for Romani survivors in Germany,<sup>5</sup> so Franz joined with other Sinti musicians to start a band which toured through the country and played for the liberating troops. During this time she met Oskar Franz, whose first wife and four children had been murdered in Auschwitz. Franz married him and they had five children together. In the years that followed, she suffered from severe depression, constant nightmares, and a relentlessly returning sense of being in captivity. Once, she ripped all the curtains down from her windows because she felt imprisoned.<sup>6</sup>

Franz was later properly diagnosed with depression during a stay at a clinic and there was finally able to talk about and to articulate the memories that haunted her. During this time she also started to write those memories down. Franz fought alone for *Entschädigung*; her husband did not see the use in making the effort (*Zwischen*, 102). The money she at last received went directly back to the Social Welfare Office in order to pay for the care her husband had needed before his death.<sup>7</sup> The fight for compensation is a common theme in all the writing that will be explored in this thesis; references to the difficulty of accessing the *Wiedergutmachung* that the authors feel they were entitled to can be found in texts by Ceija Stojka, Alfred Lessing, Karl Stojka and Otto Rosenberg. This difficulty reflects the lack of recognition Romanies received in Germany and Austria in terms of being recognised as an ethnic minority persecuted and

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<sup>4</sup>See Heike Vowinkel, 'Siegerin über den Hass', *Welt am Sonntag*, 25 February 2001.

<sup>5</sup>See Sybil Milton, 'Persecuting the Survivors', *Sinti and Roma in German-Speaking Society and Literature* (NY, Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 35-47. Hereafter cited as 'Persecuting the Survivors'.

<sup>6</sup>Reinhold Lehmann in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, p.100.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 102

victimised in the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup>

A pivotal moment in Franz's life came in the 1970s when she was moved to bring her traumatic memories into the open. In response to one of her sons being taunted as 'ein dreckiger Zigeuner' in school, Franz felt compelled to visit the school in order to speak to the pupils and teachers. She told them about the tragedy of the Holocaust and expressed her wish that this generation of German and 'Zigeuner' children should not interact with one another based on negative stereotypes and hatred.<sup>9</sup> Franz remembers the reactions of the children when she told them about the Holocaust:

Und das haben die Kinder sofort erfasst, die haben sofort [...] ihre Augen, ich hab ihre Augen gesehen und ihre Gesichter, wie sie sich verändert haben. Und die haben dann gesagt: ja warum, warum haben die so was gemacht, ja das dürfen die doch nicht.<sup>10</sup>

This experience marked the beginning of her speaking publicly about her experiences; this allowed her to process her memories and to work through them by constructing and ordering them into narratives. In 1980, her fairy tales made up a collection titled *Zigeunermärchen*, and in 1985 Franz published her autobiography, *Zwischen Liebe und Hass - Ein Zigeunerleben*, containing her memories of the trauma she experienced in the concentration camps as well as the life that she was forced to leave behind. The 2001 edition of *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* was published in response to her winning the 'Frauen Europas Deutschland' prize; this time, the book included three fairy tales and a short essay by Franz.

## 2.2 Trauma and Identity

### 2.2.1 Writing Memory

Franz has written her autobiography as a way of coming to terms with the traumatic memories of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück and to overcome her feelings of depression: 'ich schrieb in dieser Phase der Loslösung von der Depression auch meine Leiden nieder' (*Zwischen*, p. 101). Her process of working through her traumatic memories and her individual identity as a writer is a key element in her narrative, but she also attempts to establish a sense of group identity for Romanies, more particularly for German Sinti. From the opening of her narrative, she proudly states,

Wir alle haben ein Recht, auch heute noch über unser Leiden zu sprechen. Um uns selber wiederzufinden, um die Opfer zu ehren, um der heranwachsenden Generation zu sagen: So war es. So etwas soll nie wieder geschehen. Ich habe dieses Buch als Zigeunerin geschrieben. Als Zigeunerin vom Stamm der Sinti (*Zwischen*, p. 10).

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<sup>8</sup>Milton, 'Persecuting the Survivors', pp. 38-39. See also Margalit, pp. 127-133.

<sup>9</sup>Löber, pp. 2-3

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

She uses her narrative to establish herself as a writer, to contradict the stereotypical image of the uneducated 'Zigeunerin', as well as to paint a 'realistic' and ultimately more positive picture of Romani life for her readers. Franz's memories of her childhood in Germany, her traumatic experiences in the concentration camps of the Nazi regime, and her life in Germany after the war which prompted her to begin writing, help her to heal the emptiness and silence inflicted by trauma. She says, 'ich habe dieses Manuskript unter Tränen und auf den Knien geschrieben' (*Zwischen*, p. 101). Her emphasis in this statement is the therapeutic quality that writing supplied for her; she seems to want to get across that this new way of communicating her trauma indeed provided a sort of healing therapy. However, it is worth looking more closely at the memory and representation of these traumatic experiences in Franz's text and how they influence her assertion of individual and group identity.

Claudia Breger has stated that 'the space of identity is historical space'.<sup>11</sup> Because the question of representing identity is at the core of Franz's text, it is interesting to consider the writing of her own personal history and the history of the Romani people. The connection between the beginning of Romani writing in the second half of the twentieth century and the determination to create a stronger sense of Romani identity among Romanies cannot be ignored. A. Bertolt Bengsch goes so far as to call it 'die nationale Literatur der Sinti und Roma', emphasising this literature as the 'Ergebnis und Ausdruck des nationalen Bewußtseins dieses Volkes, das erst Ende der 60er Jahre unseres Jahrhunderts erwachte'.<sup>12</sup> This consciousness is noted by Slawomir Kapralski to be connected to the Holocaust in that it creates a sense of common past and common future purpose or 'a chronological linearity of Romani history, dividing it into periods "before" and "after"'.<sup>13</sup> However, the idea of 'national consciousness' is relatively new and cannot be said to apply generally to all Romanies, particularly as it has thus far been the project of Romani elites.<sup>14</sup> In all of the texts analysed in this thesis, there is a clear urgency to reveal a more positive group identity to combat the negative stereotypes which have been ascribed to Romanies by others since they first arrived in Europe centuries ago. However, another level to that group identity is also revealed. Franz, for example, emphasises that she is a 'Zigeunerin vom Stamm der Sinti' (*Zwischen*, p. 10). Similar assertions of identity can be found in texts by both Ceija and Karl Stojka as well as Alfred Lessing. For Franz, it is important to remember this persecution and give it its place in history: 'auch wir haben ein Recht, daß unsere Leiden einen Platz in der Geschichte finden' (*Zwischen*, p. 10).

Franz does put forth the experiences of victimisation she and other Romanies faced in the Holocaust, but ultimately she uses her text to reveal to readers aspects of Romani life. With autobiographies such as *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, there is a risk that Romani history will

<sup>11</sup>Breger, 'Understanding the "Other"', p. 138.

<sup>12</sup>A. Bertolt Bengsch. 'Die Literatur der Roma. Ein Überblick', *Music, Language and Literature of the Roma and Sinti*, ed. by Max Baumann, (Berlin: VWB, 2000), pp. 53-65. Here, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup>Kapralski, p. 211.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 208-211.



continue to be written separately, that they will remain perpetual victims, the suffering 'other', and will continue to be seen in terms of their persecutors.<sup>15</sup> This will do little to create a constructive dialogue between Romanies and non-Romanies. It is useful here to consider the idea of the negative sublime introduced by Dominick LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. He argues that '[t]here has been an important tendency in modern culture and thought to convert trauma into the occasion for sublimity, to transvalue it into a test of the self or the group and an entry into the extraordinary'.<sup>16</sup> This founding of new group identity based on trauma makes it difficult for the victim to leave the state of victimhood that unifies the members of this group; because of this, the roles of victim and perpetrator remain entrenched in the group's self-understanding. LaCapra goes on to say that

they [traumatic events] may also give rise to what may be termed founding traumas—traumas that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity.<sup>17</sup>

I would argue, however, that Franz's narrative resists this possibility of founding a group or individual identity based solely on her traumatic experiences.

Franz's memories must be acknowledged as part of a larger collective memory of the Romani Holocaust experience, though her narrative also presents unique qualities in the writing of these memories. Maurice Halbwachs points out that

individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over — to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu.<sup>18</sup>

Franz's work, though it may have provided her with an important therapeutic release, has been published and thus contributes to the recognition of the victimisation of Romanies, as a group, in the Holocaust. Her writing must be recognised as an important part of the collective memory of the Romani people; because it is written in German, it also places responsibility on Germany to remember the Romani experience as part of its history. As the first Romani in Germany to publish an account of her Holocaust memories, her writing demands a space for which the struggle is difficult. This need for space is one that Aleida Assmann has written about when she discusses the attempt to create through written words 'Orte, an denen sie [the victims] zur Ruhe kommen können, was [...] vor allem der Selbstberuhigung dient'.<sup>19</sup> Franz's act of writing her memories into the German language and tradition of writing demands space for her

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<sup>15</sup> Compare with Rosenhaft, 'A Photographer and his "Victims"', p. 180.

<sup>16</sup> LaCapra, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 260.

words and the people she remembers who were killed in the camps, particularly her sister and her mother. Franz recalls her first nights in jail before being deported to Auschwitz and the thoughts of her mother she had at that time:

Ganz gleich, was immer auch geschehen ist, sie war für mich immer da. Und das war für mich selbstverständlich. Oft meine ich, der Schmerz würde mich zerreißen. Ich würde an der Trennung zerbrechen. Gleichzeitig stelle ich mir vor, sie ist plötzlich in der Zelle, lächelt mich an. Oder ich höre ihre Stimme durch die dicken Wände (*Zwischen*, p. 57).

Franz's loss of her mother is captured here as her individual loss. The grief she describes that threatens to break her is individual yet something that most other readers can relate to in the horrific prospect of losing a family member. Franz's need to create a space for these memories is a matter of urgency. The structure of her narrative provides evidence of an adherence to social frameworks of memory in relating her individual memories as a contribution to Romani cultural memory. However, her writing and storytelling go beyond an acting out and repetition of trauma and offer readers many more layers of Romani cultural identity besides that of a people who have suffered.

### 2.2.2 Voice

Franz's testimony can be analysed as a text that shows, in LaCapra's words, the 'working through' of traumatic experiences from Franz's past. LaCapra describes this 'working through' as

an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as trans-ferential relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future.<sup>20</sup>

LaCapra emphasises that this process provides the opportunity to make distinctions and articulations rather than acting out, which sometimes results in repetition, blurring of distinctions of time and place, as well as the possibility of becoming trapped in relentless melancholia.

Franz brings the reader closer to her experiences by shifting to the present tense during the section of the book where she describes her experiences in the camps. In this part, titled 'Mein Holocaust', the older woman writing the text recedes and the reader is with the young Franz, experiencing present trauma: 'Und dann kam das Leid [...] Man schreibt den 27. März 1943, 8 Uhr Früh. Ich arbeite in einer Fabrik, bin seit 1940 dienstverpflichtet. Unter schwersten Bedingungen, 21 Jahre alt. Ich werde abgeholt' (*Zwischen*, p. 53). The rest of this section is told mainly in the present tense. In short, sometimes incomplete, sentences, Franz's writing works to create the sense of desperation and chaos of everyday existence in the concentration

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<sup>20</sup>LaCapra, p. 22.

camps. In some chapters, however, the reflective author again makes an appearance. For example, in the chapter 'Meine Schwester hängt am Galgen,' Franz moves away from the narrative again, placing herself back in the position of the writer, the one who is remembering. She describes the memory of seeing her sister being tortured as a punishment for Franz's escape from Ravensbrück:

Wenn ich diese Szene heute vor mir sehe. Viele werden es nicht glauben können. Was haben mir die Menschen zugefügt. [...] In diesen Tagen, in diesen Stunden und Minuten und Sekunden muß ich immer an meine arme Schwester denken. Ich weiß nur, dass sie umgekommen ist (*Zwischen*, pp. 72-73).

Shifting back into the past tense, the image of the writer is present in the memories of her sister hanging from the gallows of the camp. Franz shifts from past to present, from being there in the scene and from being an observer in the present.

However, I would argue that she resists the tendency in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* to become caught up in any repetition of trauma. Her ability to remove herself from the position of the victim to the position and voice of the storyteller reveals a loyalty to her readers as the storyteller, reminding them of the place and time the narrative is being written. In Andrea Reiter's study, '*Auf daß sie entsteigen der Dunkelheit*': *Die literarische Bewältigung von KZ-Erfahrung*, the author highlights the importance of locating the literary in accounts of the Holocaust. She recognises that working through traumatic events from the past often occurs through writing or any kind of articulation of the experiences. Reiter stresses the role of structuring memories in the overcoming of trauma saying, 'überwiegend erfolgt die Sinnzuordnung aber erst im Bericht. Die Bericht-form erlaubt es, den Erlebnissen eine definitive zeitliche Struktur zu geben, die durch Beginn, Mitte, und Ende markiert ist'.<sup>21</sup> When a definite structure is involved in the recollection of these memories, the events are given a location in time and perhaps most importantly, the promise of an ending. These parts are very clearly evident in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*. Philomena Franz begins by writing a section called 'Meine Kindheit', then moves into the second section of the narrative, 'Mein Holocaust'.

In the 1985 edition, Franz's narrative stops when she is discovered in her hiding place by two Russian soldiers and continues in brief chapters illustrating the events immediately after the war. These chapters imitate Franz's writing style, but are written by Reinhold Lehmann; the 1985 edition ends with Lehmann's afterword in which he attempts to highlight the importance of Franz's narrative in bringing the plight of Romanies in Germany into the open. He encourages readers to engage in fighting for Romani rights and emphasises the importance of remembering in order to combat racism in Germany today.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, the 2001 edition includes three of Franz's fairy tales and ends with a self-reflective essay, 'Herbstliche Impres-

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<sup>21</sup>Reiter, p. 69.

<sup>22</sup>Reinhold Lehmann 'Der Bericht eines Opfers' in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass: ein Zigeunerleben*, (Rösrath: P. Franz, 2001), pp. 103-107. Here, p. 107.

sionen', in which she writes about a trip she takes to the Altenberger Dom and then further into the countryside, describing her observations. She gets out of the car and walks through a small town, takes out a notebook. 'Ich mache mir ein paar Notizen, und das wiesenreiche Bergische Land schaut mir dabei über den Schultern'. And with these words, the reader is left with the image of the writer.

In this way, in the 2001 edition of *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, issued after Franz was named 'Frau Europas', she presents her readers with a new image, that of a Romani woman sitting down and writing, whether it be at a computer or in a notebook, not only the traumatic memories of her past, but also her own fairy tales and reflections. There is an urgency in the way that she writes and tells of her thoughts and experiences. Her motivation for this communication is perhaps best explained in a passage where she remembers her grandfather, who had an enormous influence on her life. She describes him spontaneously singing a song while they are walking in the woods:

Alles war schon im Kopf meines Großvaters komponiert. Und da blieb es auch. [...] Fast alles, was mein Großvater erdachte und komponierte ist verschwunden, das wenige, das aufgeschrieben wurde, ist im Krieg vernichtet worden (*Zwischen*, p. 35).

Franz is writing to preserve the memory of events from her past and to reveal to her readership what has been lost. After so many stories were silenced forever in the gas chambers of the concentration camps, she has reached back to the traditions of her childhood to heal the wound inflicted by the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust. Assmann writes of cultural memory and trauma,

dieses [kulturelle] Gedächtnis wird in der Situation der Desintegration der Person durch das Trauma zur vitalen Ressource. Dieses Gedächtnis zu reaktivieren heißt, den Teufelskreis der Zerstörung und Ausbeutung zu verlassen und eine überlegene Sicht zu gewinnen.<sup>23</sup>

In this significant way, Franz resists the danger of becoming trapped in a repetition of the traumatic events and establishes her identity as a German Romani writer, placing her own written memories in the context of German and Romani collective memories.

### 2.2.3 Writing Gender

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Franz was the first Romani to write of her experiences in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. This is an interesting point to consider in terms of gender as she makes her contribution to a neglected field of study as a woman from a traditionally patriarchal society.<sup>24</sup> Anna Hardman has responded to criticisms of using gender

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<sup>23</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 294.

<sup>24</sup> On the patriarchal structure of Romani society, see Beate Eder-Jordan "'Die Frau war Mann und Frau". Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma: Gespräch über ein tabuisiertes Thema', *Stimme von und für Minderheiten* 28

to analyse women's memoirs of the Holocaust by arguing that these texts 'reveal different kinds of experience to those reflected in men's testimony'.<sup>25</sup> Franz's narrative has the ability to contribute something to the discussion of these different kinds of experiences and also to reveal something specifically about the experience of Romani women in the Holocaust. Sybil Milton has noted the paucity of knowledge about experiences of the concentration camps of the Third Reich specific to Romani women and encourages researchers to look at the individuality of these experiences. As Milton herself states, not enough research exists to use a 'gender-sensitive approach for analyzing distinctions between the experiences of female and male Sinti and Roma during the Holocaust'.<sup>26</sup> However, Franz's text can provide us with some useful insights into her own experiences as a Romani woman in the camps. Zoe Waxman has argued that 'the Holocaust is not a unified event, but many different events. It is impossible to conflate different survivor stories into a universal Holocaust experience because no such experience exists'.<sup>27</sup> The fact that a woman, as opposed to a man, was the first Romani to write about the Holocaust, may also tell us something about the role of Romani women in Romani society. Aparna Rao has drawn attention to the 'Zigeunerin als Brücke zwischen den Gesellschaften' and notes that one of the traditional roles of the female Romani was to deal and have contact with non-Romanies.<sup>28</sup> Considering Franz's work from this standpoint, it is also a distinct marker of her role as a Romani woman to be the one to communicate with the outside world about what has happened to her and to the Romani people. While Franz's emphasis is on her writing as a way of working through her traumatic memories, her text could also be understood as a necessary communication between herself and the *Gadje*, in her accepted traditional role as a female. Indeed, she goes one step further in actually writing down her experiences and crossing a traditional cultural boundary in the representation of this communication.

Philomena Franz writes openly about experiences that are unique to her as a woman in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*. Waxman writes that 'what is often overlooked is the importance of gender differences in the narration of experience. Testimonies are not spontaneous outbursts of information, but come from the careful representation of experience, or the perceived "appropriateness" of experiences for publication'.<sup>29</sup> What comes across strongly in Franz's narration of her memories of the Holocaust is not a censoring of what may be considered appropriate, but a desire to give an account of experiences that are unique to women in the camps. She remembers, for example, her arrival in Auschwitz and the humiliation of having to undress in

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(1998), 12-15. Hereafter cited as 'Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma'. See Hardman, pp. 2-5 on the debates surrounding the scholarly evaluation of a gendered approach to looking at Holocaust memories.

<sup>25</sup>Hardman, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Sybil Milton, 'Hidden Lives: Sinti and Roma Women', in *Experience and Expression. Women, the Nazis and the Holocaust*, ed. by Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Detroit: Wayne UP, 2003), pp. 53-75. Here, p. 54. Hereafter cited as 'Hidden Lives'.

<sup>27</sup>Zoe Waxman, 'Testimony and Representation' in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 487-507. Here, p. 496.

<sup>28</sup>Aparna Rao cited in Eder-Jordan, 'Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma', p. 13.

<sup>29</sup>See Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, p. 128.

front of the officers and other prisoners in the following way:

Alle entkleiden sich langsam. Es ist bitterkalt. Ich bekomme Gänsehaut. Und dann kommen rasch hintereinander die Befehle: 'Laßt die Kleider vor euch liegen. Einen Schritt zurück. Jeder vor sein Kleiderbündel'. Abschätzige, neugierige, auch fachmännische Blicke treffen meinen Körper (*Zwischen*, p. 61).

There is no feeling here that Franz feels embarrassed to be describing this, even though it is against Romani traditions and rules for a woman's body to be seen by others and particularly other family members,<sup>30</sup> but she writes candidly about these experiences in her narrative. Perhaps it can be said that Franz wants to bring to light this particular method of humiliation and torture to which she was subjected.

Franz consciously describes male and female roles in the camps. She writes about interactions with men in positions of power who sometimes treat her in a special way because she is an attractive woman, but she never loses her self control or dignity in this attention. For example, when she is about to be forced to have her hair shorn off, an opportunity to avoid this humiliation is presented:

Zwei SS-Männer mit Ochsenziemern erwarten uns. Eine Aufseherin will mich auf den Stuhl zerren, aber da ruft schon einer: 'Die nicht, die Haare bleiben. [...] 'mach mal deine Haare auf'. Ich habe Haare, die bis zu meinen Knien fallen. Und er sagt: 'Die sieht ja aus wie eine Dschungelprinzessin' (*Zwischen*, p. 62).

This racist exoticisation of Romani women was not uncommon in Germany during the 1930s and 40s, when the darker colour of their skin was used to connect them with the stereotype of the primitive oriental and exotic.<sup>31</sup> As Rosenhaft points out: 'zwei Erzählmotive, die in diesem Kontext wichtig sind, sind die Haare und der Tanz — beides Verweise auf Alltagspraktiken, die für das kulturelle Selbstverständnis der Sinti wichtig waren, an denen aber der erotisierende Blick der Gadje gerne hing'.<sup>32</sup> The SS officer's desire for her to keep her hair is tied to his idea of her as an exotic woman. At this point in the narrative, the female guard present remarks how lucky Franz is to be selected for the prostitution block. Franz's reaction to this statement is vehement:

Da gehen mir die Augen auf. Mir ist so, als würde ich von einem Mühlstein zermalmt, als müßte ich langsam sterben. Ich schließe die Augen, muß mich an die Wand lehnen, um nicht umzufallen, denke an meine Angehörigen, die hier gestorben sind und vergast wurden. Mein Gott, was tust du mir hier an! Das kann ich doch nicht, das halte ich doch nicht aus. Diese Qualen (*Zwischen*, p. 62).

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<sup>30</sup>See Rosenhaft, 'Geschlecht des Misstrauens'. See also Eder-Jordan 'Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma', for further discussion of traditional female roles in Romani culture.

<sup>31</sup>See Sybil Milton's discussion of other Romani women's testimonies where one woman remembers being fired from the bakery where she worked for her 'blackness' in 'Hidden Lives', p. 56. Milton also writes that in October 1935, the Solingen Nazi party district office complained of Gypsies living in a 'German' area of town, referring to them as 'a Mongolian type of species' (p. 58). On Orientalist views of Romanies in Germany, see Nicholas Saul's *Gypsies and Orientalism*.

<sup>32</sup>Rosenhaft, 'Geschlecht des Misstrauens'.

Where others may not have written about this happening, Franz allows the scene of humiliation an important place in her narrative. She goes on to show the development of that feeling of humiliation and desperation into resistance and courage: 'Nein, nein', rufe ich, 'ich will sterben wie meine Verwandten und Geschwister, die ihr alle hier getötet habt. Ich will nicht eine Dirne für euch sein. Bringt mich um!' (*Zwischen*, p. 63). In this scene, Franz reveals herself as someone who, contrary to the popular stereotype of the *Zigeunerin* as the sexual seductress, will not compromise her morals. In including this memory in her narrative, Franz also subverts the common misperception of the promiscuous *Zigeunerin*, the stereotypical 'Carmen' image. It is important to her that the reader knows she resisted this proposition and was able to fight against losing her dignity.

It is difficult to know what Franz's inhibitions, if any, would have been in making public a scene like the one mentioned above public. Even after refusing the officers, she still had the courage to beg to keep her hair. According to her narrative, it took three people to hold her down so they could cut off her hair and then shave a cross on her scalp. The shaving of a cross on her scalp and the loss of her hair represent an intrusion in her life and her identity; in some way she has persevered, but her body has also been harmed. Reiter highlights the importance of these memories of bodily harm in survivor accounts. She writes, 'Wie die moderne Interaktionstheorie bestätigt, stellen Kleidung und Haarschnitt im normalen Leben diejenigen Attribute dar, über die sich Identität primär mitteilt'.<sup>33</sup> She goes on to say that the initial shock of arrival in the concentration camps and the taking away of these individual qualities of identity forced many prisoners to react defensively. It was this ultimate taking away of their inner selves that they tried to resist in order to express their individuality again. For Franz, her hair was a source of pride and a physical representation of her personal identity. The idea of losing it caused her to react in an explosive way.

Another experience unique to women in the camps was that of motherhood. For Franz an important memory was one of a little girl she took care of after the girl's mother died. She writes of waiting with other Romani women and children to be sent to the gas chambers.

Jeder möchte der Dusche und der Gaskammer entkommen. Und ich spüre plötzlich, wie ein Kind zwischen meinen Beinen steht. Ein kleines Mädchen, das kleine Mädchen dieser polnischen Zigeunerin. Als ich das Kind fühle, da spüre ich den Instinkt schon als Mutter, obwohl ich noch kein Kind geboren habe. [...] Ich will es nicht mehr loslassen. Und es klammert sich fest an mich (*Zwischen*, p. 86).

The Polish girl's mother and sister are killed in the gas chambers, but Franz, as a German 'Zigeunerin', survived that particular selection, keeping the little girl with her. Although Franz is unable to spare the girl from the gas chambers for much longer, during the few weeks they spend together she is overwhelmed by a feeling of motherhood and repeatedly refers to herself as the child's mother: 'Ich habe das Kind noch bei mir. Es betrachtet mich als seinen Schutz.

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<sup>33</sup>Reiter, p. 33.

Ich bin seine Mutter' (*Zwischen*, p. 87). Even in the writing of this memory, she recalls the feeling that this child was her own. The extreme circumstances of Auschwitz made this role of surrogate motherhood hers.

The female role as the mother, one who is meant to have many children, is accepted and evident in many of these texts. Franz's representation of herself as a mother in her narrative, her insistence on having felt this instinct to mother this child whose own mother had been sent into the gas chambers is interesting. It is possible that she is establishing herself in the traditional role of a Romani woman her age who would, most likely, have been a mother. Given the popular stereotype in non-Romani society of the promiscuous *Zigeunerin* who is unable to nurture her children and of the child-snatching 'Gypsies', there is also a possibility that she is presenting the image of a caring woman who will take in a child in need. Against the backdrop of the horrific concentration camp, Franz's representation of herself as someone who can be nurturing and caring of a child who has lost its mother presents a positive image to oppose that long-held stereotype. She also relates moments of connection with other women and, particularly with the child she takes in. In the epilogue of her narrative, she speaks as a mother: 'Heute noch, nach über 50 Jahren, denke ich an das kleine polnische Mädchen. [...] Wie schrecklich war doch die Sprachlosigkeit dieser Kinder, die dazu verurteilt waren, mehr zu ertragen als sie verkraften konnten!' (*Zwischen*, p. 94).

As part of her effort to show the togetherness of Romanies in the camps, as opposed to the in-fighting that occurred among other prisoner groups, she remembers dancing with the other women.

Wir sahen, wie die anderen miteinander umgingen. Aber wir machten uns Hoffnung, machten zusammen Musik. Schlugen im Takt. Sangen zusammen. Und manchmal tanzten wir sogar im Lager Csardas. Die Mädchen stiepten. Und oft kamen die Aufseherinnen und schauten rein und waren interessiert und sagten, ja gibt es denn so was (*Zwischen*, p. 75).

The cultural traditions of Romanies are brought into Franz's memories here as she portrays the solidarity and connection between herself and the other Romani female prisoners. In other instances in her narrative she recalls the women lying close to one another under the one blanket they were given to preserve warmth, and remembers when all of the female prisoners endured torture at the hands of the guards in order not to betray the one amongst them who had stolen a pot of coffee for all (*Zwischen*, p. 90). However, Hardman points out that to perceive female experiences of the camps solely through the themes of motherhood and nurturing between them would be too simplistic: 'Critics who construct femininity as synonymous with mothering and relationality either ignore or evade testimony which points to other memories of women, such as the female Kapo [...] or woman who kills'.<sup>34</sup> Franz's portrayal of the perpetrators in the

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<sup>34</sup>Hardman, p. 16.



camps reveals her horror at the fact that specifically women could be performing the role of the guard in these camps. She describes them as hyenas in the following statement:

Die Aufseherinnen waren oft blutjunge Mädchen. Und ich habe mich oft gefragt, wie ist das möglich? Wie kommen diese jungen Menschen hier rein? Die waren doch so wie wir. Dagegen waren die jungen Frauen, 30 und älter, schon richtige Hyänen. Die wurden durch den Dienst immer radikaler und rabiater (*Zwischen*, p. 76).

In this passage, Franz portrays these women as animals taking pleasure in the cruelty and brutality they inflict — an image far removed from the traditional feminine figure of the nurturing mother.

## 2.3 Heimat and Identity

Writing, storytelling and enforcing the connection with her homeland are integral to Philomena Franz's overcoming of trauma. She is able to transcend the sense of emptiness and loss of voice she experiences by drawing upon her personal history and defining it as part of the history of Germany. In an interview, she tells of a visit to Israel where she was asked why she stayed in Germany after the war. She remembers replying to this question, 'Hier [Deutschland] ist meine Heimat. Ich habe keine andere'.<sup>35</sup> Franz's reference to her 'Heimat', Germany, in this statement is striking. After the liberation of the camps in 1945, Romanies did not have the option of going anywhere other than back to where they had been deported from and, with little support from the authorities, had to find work immediately to continue to survive.<sup>36</sup> However, Franz's assertion here suggests an emotional attachment, a sense of belonging and identification which echoes throughout her work. Germany, then, is not a place where she has to stay due to a lack of other options, but rather a place she wants to stay and which she considers to be home. This brings the problematic concept of Heimat as a theme into her work.<sup>37</sup> While the concept of Heimat has a long and troubled history in Germany through its conservative and provincial emphasis on the purity of place and landscape, there is a universal element to the longing for the security of a familiar Heimat that offers a connection to one's past and ancestry. Franz brings her own particular connection to the concept of Heimat out through the fact that the landscape and homeland she mentions is very much connected to the natural world which features prominently in her work. Germany has been home to many Romani families for centuries and is a natural presence in their stories and so, in a sense, they are making their

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<sup>35</sup>Bernd Dörries, 'Philomena Franz, Lehrerin der Liebe,' *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten* 7 March 2001.

<sup>36</sup>Eve Rosenhaft, 'The Gypsy's Revenge — Betrayal and personal retribution as themes in the post-Holocaust experience and memory of German Sinti', in *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour II. Proceedings of the Second Conference on Post-Holocaust Experience and Memory*, ed. by J.D. Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (Osnabrück: Socolo, 2008), pp. 406-13 [CD-Rom publication]. Here, p. 408. Hereafter cited as 'The Gypsy's Revenge'.

<sup>37</sup>On the concept of Heimat and its transformations, see Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 1-29.

mark on a land which is, as Assmann says, 'überzogen mit Geschichten';<sup>38</sup> among these are the stories/histories of the Romanies and of Philomena Franz.

Through the act of writing and remembering, Franz creates an opportunity for dialogue with the *Gadje*, the non-Romanies, and also constructs a new identity for herself in opposition to the identity prescribed by the *Gadje* population for Romanies as criminal, asocial, inarticulate and ill-educated. She also places herself in opposition to the traditional Romani role of keeping stories, traditions and customs within their community, wary of connecting these to the land where they live and to the people among whom they live.<sup>39</sup> Her writing about her life and memories in the German language takes the bold step of including herself in a German written language tradition. Her memories of the Holocaust can therefore become part of German memory and, in crossing from the oral tradition to the written, Franz creates a new cultural identification for Romanies. In particular, through the incorporation of three fairy tales at the end of the 2001 edition of her work, the reader can gain a sense that Franz's personal history and stories are bound tightly with the history and location of Germany and can be used to construct a new cultural identity over the experience of trauma by drawing upon stories and traditions from her past. She establishes belonging and Heimat as part of her identity in this text through her use of language, her representations of landscape and nature, and her illustration of moments of connection with others beyond the Romani community.

### 2.3.1 Language

It is significant that Franz chose to write her text in German, rather than Romani.<sup>40</sup> Reiter points out that many Holocaust survivors chose not to write in German because it was the language of the perpetrators and so was an inappropriate language for representing the experiences of the victim. She says (notably in specific reference only to the Jewish experience): 'Mit dem Mord am jüdischen Volk sei die deutsche Sprache gemordet worden, in dem Maße, als die Ausrottung der Juden in der Vernichtung eines charakterischen Idioms vorgeprägt und davon begleitet worden sei'.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting, considering this statement, that all German and Austrian Romani survivor accounts of the Holocaust have been written in German. Reasons for this include the fact that Romani does not as yet have an official written form, but more importantly it would appear that Romani writers have consciously chosen to write in German because of the readership they want to reach; part of their motivation for writing – the assertion of a positive group identity for the benefit of those who have long misunderstood them – becomes clear through their use of German. Franz does not refer to the Romani language in *Zwischen Liebe*

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<sup>38</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Tebbutt, 'Conclusion', p. 147.

<sup>40</sup> For a history of the role of the Romani language in scholarship concerning Romanies, see Yaron Matras, 'The Role of Language', pp. 53-78.

<sup>41</sup> Reiter, p. 115.

und Hass. Even in the first section of the text, where she remembers her childhood travelling with her family or later in her memories of the camps, she does not refer to their language as a unique connecting force between prisoners. This omission sets her work apart from other writing by Romani writers like Ceija and Karl Stojka, who write in German but do include phrases and words in Romanes within their German-language texts. Reiter emphasises the importance of the decision made by survivors to write in a certain language: 'Bereits mit der Wahl einer bestimmten Sprache für ihren Bericht treffen die Überlebenden eine für die Bewertung ihrer Erlebnisse selbst bedeutungsvolle Entscheidung' (*Zwischen*, p. 114). The choice by Franz to write her memories in German can be read as a concrete way of using language to establish further her identity as a German Romani. However, the lack of any insight into Romanes in her text may suggest a certain caution in her choice – the possibility of a resistance to or fear of revealing too much about Romani traditions.

Franz lets the simplicity of her language and the straightforwardness of her metaphors in this text convey the paradox between the experience of atrocity and the inadequacy of words to represent these atrocities. Assmann has remarked on the quality of words to act as 'leere Hülsen' in this context, unable in their universality to express the unique quality of what they are being used to express.<sup>42</sup> For example when she begins the section of her narrative 'Mein Holocaust', she writes, 'und dann kam das Leid, wie ein Schlag mit einem Hammer– mitten ins Gesicht' (*Zwischen*, p. 53). Although this is perhaps not an original metaphor, the use of it in her text is quite powerful. She follows the metaphor with the statement, 'so stark, daß Ich mein ganzes Leben brauche. Daß ich ihn wohl nie überwinden werde' (*Zwischen*, p. 53). The short sentences are each like the powerful quick blows of the hammer and work to express the pain Franz suffered. She uses these short sentences to portray both experiences of beauty and hope as well as moments of horror and aggression. One of her most frequently used metaphors is the somewhat clichéd image of a bird. In describing one of her first experiences of being imprisoned, immediately before she is sent to Auschwitz, she compares herself to a bird that cannot fly (*Zwischen*, p. 56). When she tells of her first escape from Ravensbrück, she remembers the land around her and her intuition for the environment she finds herself in:

Ich bin frei. Ich gehe durch die Felder, ich komme in den Wald. Im Mondlicht kann ich den Weg erkennen. [...] Ich streife durch den Wald. Nachts krieche ich in Heuhaufen hinein. Ich spüre, es muß eine größere Stadt in der Nähe sein. Aber ich sehe nur Felder, kaum Häuser, nur hier und da mal ein kleines Dorf (*Zwischen*, p. 69).

Franz's language in this passage conveys a sense of ease with herself as part of her natural environment and a feeling of being at home here, having made it out of the unnatural prison of Ravensbrück. The moonlight which is comforting in its provision of light, the 'erkennen' of the way, the emphasis on freedom in the first sentence and her use of the word 'spüren' in order

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<sup>42</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 260.

to convey her intuitive connection with her environment, all reveal the sense of *Geborgenheit* that the natural environment holds for her. Though this could be seen as a naive construction of utopian natural setting, I think that Franz uses these images to reveal her culture of mobility and connection with landscape as a positive aspect of Romani life — one that will be accepted by the *Gadje*. She resists constructing or confirming the hollow stereotypical image imposed on Romanies by non-Romanies of the *wanderlustiger Zigeuner*<sup>43</sup> by presenting herself in the midst of this relationship with nature as an educated person / writer and her family as hard workers with accepted professions.

### 2.3.2 Representations of Nature

The natural world is indeed a constant presence in Franz's *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* as well as her *Märchen*. She uses images of nature in order to bring the reader into the place that she is remembering. She ties the natural world to her idyllic memories of childhood and the Romani way of life throughout her book: 'das erste Lied der Nachtigall in der Dämmerung ist leise, wechselt, variiert, lernt gleichsam aus sich selbst und steigert sich nach und nach. Dann erfüllt der Gesang das ganze Land. Wir lauschten nur. Und die älteren Leute erzählten dann von früher' (*Zwischen*, p. 13). In this description of the nightingale's song Franz portrays her family listening to the bird in silence before the older family members start telling their own stories against the backdrop of the forest with the small villages in the valley below. Further references, particularly in the first section of Franz's narrative, 'Meine Kindheit', to 'das Läuten der Dorfkirche', 'die Wiesen in ihrer Blütenpracht', 'die Maiprozession ins Dorf' (*Zwischen*, p. 13) and her chapter called 'Gottes Geschöpfe', bring to light the rural idyll she remembers from her childhood. These images and the nostalgia with which Franz reflects on them resonate with a more conservative view of the concept of Heimat and space, which emphasises the lost world of the past and the uncomplicated 'purity' of rural life.<sup>44</sup>

Although the attempt to reclaim lost space could be said to bind Franz's work with this conservative quality of Heimat, I think that Franz's use of nature imagery in her narrative has more to do with fighting the loss of Romani identity, of which the Romani relationship to nature is an important part.<sup>45</sup> Franz uses these images of nature as a way of reaching out to her readership, educating readers as to the role of nature in Romani life. Part of the romantic stereotypical and 'positive' images for the *Gadje* is that of the *Zigeunerleben*, in touch with nature and far from the threats of modernisation.<sup>46</sup> In many ways this view of Romanies as unspoiled by modernisation and belonging to the land overlaps with more conservative notions of Heimat,

<sup>43</sup>Kirsten Martins-Heuß, *Zur mythischen Figur des Zigeuners* (Frankfurt am Main: 1983), p. 93.

<sup>44</sup>Boa and Palfreyman, p. 2. See also Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>45</sup>See Eder, *Geboren*, p. 128. See also Hancock, *Roads of the Roma*, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup>Susan Tebbutt, 'From Carmen to Coppersmith', p. 216.

which were later used in National Socialist ideology, where traditional values and beliefs reacted to any threat of change from the outside world.<sup>47</sup> Franz, however, takes from these scenes of nature further positive insights into Romani life: 'Aus dieser Einstellung schöpfen wir die Lebensweisheit, daß jeder Tag schön ist, jeder kommende Tag mit ein bißchen gutem Willen schöner werden kann' (*Zwischen*, p. 13). In this statement, Franz makes clear the sense of urgency she feels to shed a positive light on her people's way of life. She connects her memories of nature and landscape to her family and to the 'Zigeunerfeste' that are an important part of their life and claims these as part of what can be seen as a more universal element of Heimat in the way Jean Améry defines it in his essay 'Wieviel Heimat braucht der Mensch': 'Heimat ist Sicherheit'.<sup>48</sup> Her sense of security in this text comes across as being strongly bound with the natural setting of her childhood life and the people who were part of that life. Franz emphasises with pride that teachers in schools were often impressed by the knowledge Romani children had of biology and geography (*Zwischen*, 25), thereby reinforcing a strong and positive connection between nature, landscape and Romani identity in her text.

In Franz's *Märchen*, which she includes at the end of the text, nature also features prominently - alone in two of the titles, 'Der große Bär' and 'Sonnegei'. The last Märchen, 'Als Malone und ihr Mann unsterblich wurden' also centers around Malone, a girl born from a *Melone*. In all of these fairy tales, the theme of overcoming the power of evil is at the core of the lesson to be taken from the story. The stories all feature some powerful force of evil; this power is confronted and dealt with by using their own resources – the magic of nature. For example, in the third story, about Malone, Franz writes:

Damals starb, wie es so sein sollte, der König, und von der Zeit an regierte ein schrecklicher Machthaber. Er versetzte die ganze Welt in Angst und Schrecken, denn die Art, wie er seine Mitmenschen verfolgte, ließ das ganze Land erbeben. Für ihn waren sie so gleichgültig wie die Pfirsichblüten auf dem Baum (*Zwischen*, p. 139).

This 'Machthaber' threatens to destroy the town which had been blessed by 'Frau Natur' thus disrupting the '*Geborgenheit*' and '*Gewissheit*' that had hitherto characterised the village. At the end of this story, Malone and her lover are separated when soldiers come to arrest, kill and bury him. When Malone lies down on his grave, it opens and she jumps in. Much to the consternation of the soldiers, the story ends with Malone and her lover transformed into butterflies, flying out of the grave and into the sky. Franz describes her characters as yearning to regain their peaceful relationship with their natural surroundings; the inclusion of these fairy tales at the end of her narrative of her own experiences in the Holocaust indicate that for Franz they are a way to illustrate her own suffering and the suffering of her people who were subject to the tyranny of a 'schrecklicher Machthaber'. This unique representation of Holocaust

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<sup>47</sup>Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 2-7

<sup>48</sup>Améry, p. 82.

experience through the traditional form of storytelling and fairy tales combines Franz's step from the oral tradition to the written with her own way of telling the story, and marks it as Romani. Her distinctly Romani way of remembering and communicating is brought to the page in German, calling on its readership to remember and reflect on the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust.

Her use of nature in her fairy tales and in the narrative of her memories drives her writing and is used as a way of remembering. Franz uses nature to connect with her memories of the past. In the essay 'Herbstliche Impressionen' at the end of her book, Franz writes, 'ich schließe meine Augen und versetze mich in die gute alte Zeit zurück, wo die Wiese noch Königin war und wo sich noch duftende Kräuter an den Händen hielten, wie ein Ringelreihen lachender Mädchen' (*Zwischen*, p. 147). Her use of images of nature functions as an element of Romani tradition and culture in her text; it asserts a claim to place in her homeland. For Franz, nature and this rural idyll is tied to a different identification from the conservative aspects of the concept of Heimat. These are tied to her family and their professions, place and the ability to travel, trade horses, perform music, go to markets etc. It was the Romani way of life and identity that was threatened by the tyranny of the Third Reich.

Written in a lyrical and conversational style, Franz invites the reader to share the memories of her childhood in Germany in the first half of her book, entitled 'Meine Kindheit'. She tells of the life she led with her parents and seven siblings: 'Wir spielten Dramen, auch Operetten, heitere Stücke, aber natürlich auch "Zigeunerbaron", und "Carmen". Das waren Stücke, zu denen wir Zigeuner passten, von denen die Zuschauer glaubten sie seien ein Teil unseres Zigeunerlebens' (*Zwischen*, p. 11). Franz is proud of her family's occupation as musicians and performers; she boasts that her grandfather performed at a musical competition held by König Wilhelm von Württemberg in 1906 and won the golden rose (*Zwischen*, p. 30). But she is careful to emphasise that they were professional theatrical performers playing for an audience, which inevitably required them to play what the audience wanted to hear. Franz describes herself at seven years old dancing the Csardas for an audience, 'mit roten Stiefelchen, einem ungarischen Kostüm. Mein Haar war zu einer Krone geflochten, mit weißen Blüten darin. So eben, wie man sich ein kleine Zigeunerin vorstellte' (*Zwischen*, p. 12). Franz stating how she dressed up to be the sort of *Zigeunerin* that the *Gadje* had in mind raises questions about the security Franz claims to feel in her homeland. It is possible to detect in this a sense of caution in carefully revealing some of what the reader wants and expects to read. Her life away from the stage, however, as she describes it, rounds out this image into that of a real person. Music and stories are present at family gatherings, as is common in many musical families, but Franz also tells of herself as a little girl making dolls with her mother, going to school and making friends, and taking walks with her grandfather, learning the lessons he teaches her about respect for plants and animals. Again, it is evident that her portrayals of Romani life are tightly bound

to nature and landscape.

The theme of nature and its role in Franz's *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* can be further explored. In the beginning of her narrative, she reflects

selbst in der tiefsten Nacht, in der größten Finsternis, selbst in der menschlichen Dunkelheit der Massenvernichtungslager habe ich mich an die Worte meines Großvaters und an die Erlebnisse in der Natur erinnert. Ich spürte den Wind, roch die Apfelblüte, hörte die Vögel und sah im Traum meinen Großvater. Er sagte zu mir: Siehst du die stille Quelle dort, den blühenden Apfelbaum, hier und überall in der Natur begegnet euch Gott in der Wärme seiner großen Liebe (*Zwischen*, p. 25).

In this passage, nature is represented as a source of comfort to Franz and supplies her with a connection to memories of her family. Despite the darkness of the time, she thinks of the apple blossoms, birdsong, and the image of her grandfather. While being able to find comfort in these images in such a place of horror as the concentration camps may seem overly idealised to many readers, the function of the comfort and *Geborgenheit* which these images represent in Franz's text must be acknowledged. According to Hancock, 'the ubiquitous references to flowers and the wind and the rain in Romani poetry seem to have become a surrogate outdoors for sedentary Romani writers in the late twentieth century'.<sup>49</sup>

Franz herself asserts that she could not have survived the concentration camps without the happy memories of her childhood outdoors. She writes, 'Wenn ich im Lager war, setzte ich mich in eine Ecke, schloss die Augen oder sah in die Sonne. Ich habe mich anstrahlen lassen. Ich habe mich erinnert. Und ich konnte überleben durch das, was ich mit meinen eigenen Augen gesehen hatte' (*Zwischen*, p. 23). These memories of beauty and contentment from her childhood are presented with great dignity, conveying pride for the way of life her family led. Assmann writes of the importance of rediscovering land and placing oneself in that land: 'Das Land lebt in Tieren, Sinneswahrnehmungen und insbesondere in Geschichten. Das Land wiederzugewinnen heisst, die Geschichten wiederzugewinnen, die in die Topographie des Landes eingeschrieben sind'.<sup>50</sup> The rediscovery and retaking of ownership of the landscape associated with homeland through stories is a central theme in Franz's work. She places her own fairy tales as well as her memories of her life within the German written tradition. Her representations of nature as something that, in a sense, belongs to her and her people through their respect and understanding for the natural world, asserts her conviction that this land is home; this assertion of belonging also contradicts popular perceptions of Romani life which don't allow for Romanies to have this feeling of being at home in a certain place.<sup>51</sup> Franz actively refutes the image of the wandering 'Zigeuner', content in his or her homelessness.

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<sup>49</sup>See Hancock, *Roads of the Roma*, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup>Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, pp. 292-93.

<sup>51</sup>Tebbutt, 'Sinti and Roma: From Scapegoats to Self-Assertion', in *Sinti and Roma. Gypsies in German-speaking Society and Literature*, ed. by Susan Tebbutt, (NY and Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 9-23. Here, p. 21. See also Martins-Heuß, *Zur mythischen Figur des Zigeuners*, p. 93.

Franz presents a counter-image to this very idea of the *Zigeuner* without a home when she describes with great pride the *Zigeunerwagen* she lived in with her family:

Unser Wohnwagen war eine Pracht. Mit gewölbten Schränken, die vom Boden bis zur Decke reichten. Alles aus Mahogoni, mit bleigefärbten Spiegeln. Betten und Schränke waren mit schönen Einlegearbeiten verziert. Der Wagen war mit Linoleum ausgelegt: gelbe Rosen, auf blauem Untergrund. In der Mitte des Wagens das Wohnzimmer mit einem blauen Plüschsofa mit gelben Blumen. Hinter der Schiebetür die Küche. Im Schrank das schönste Porzellan und Geschirr. Der Herd, verchromt. Das Ofenrohr, blau emailliert und wieder mit gelben Blumen bemalt. Die kupfernen Töpfe an den Wänden (*Zwischen*, p. 15).

The great detail in which Franz describes her memory of that wagon and the space she devotes to it in her narrative are significant in her desire to give the reader an idea of the importance of space and a sense of home in her family's life. These material possessions which give the reader the impression of the security this place held for Franz - the copper pots hanging on the walls and the theme of blue with yellow flowers throughout - bring to mind Jean Améry's remark that 'wir sind [...] darauf gestellt, in Dingen zu leben, die uns Geschichten erzählen'.<sup>52</sup> For Améry, a sense of Heimat and security does have a strong attachment to stories and memories of the past. The world that Franz attempts to access through her sense of loss is in line with the 'Kindheits- und Jugendland' Améry defines as an integral part of Heimat. He goes on to explain 'Wer sie verloren hat, bleibt ein Verlorener'.<sup>53</sup>

Franz revisits her childhood world and maintains a sort of connection to it through the memories she portrays of life before the Holocaust in 'Meine Kindheit'. She remembers elements of their lifestyle — how in the beginning, they would not settle in a house for the winter but would continue to travel through the harshest weather. Her memory of washing in the snow is one of the only times she indicates to the reader that hardship was involved in this life on the road, but even this memory is presented romantically. Franz's hesitation to look critically on her past or the Romani lifestyle may again suggest a cautious reflection on her readership. She binds herself to the landscape in her memories of the time before the concentration camps: 'Wir Kinder waren ganz geprägt von den Jahreszeiten. Wir lebten in den Wäldern, liefen durch die Felder, durch die Wiesen. Ganz farbenprächtig und bunt steht der Herbst vor meinen Augen' (*Zwischen*, p. 21). In this passage, the immediacy of the scene is apparent through Franz's slip from the past to the present tense as she recalls it. She sets up nature as an ally and its connection for her to Romani cultural identity, and uses it as a way of accessing these memories. The sounds, sights and smells of nature take her back to a world she considers lost. Améry comments on the quality of Heimat to access this other world: 'Noch öffnet uns, was wir Heimat nennen, den Zugang zu einer Realität, die für uns in der Wahrnehmung durch die

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<sup>52</sup> Améry, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



Sinne besteht'.<sup>54</sup>

As previously discussed, Franz does make a connection between landscape and freedom in the writing of her memories. She tells of a dream she remembers having of looking out beyond the gates of the concentration camp with its menacing slogan 'Arbeit macht frei' and seeing freedom. She writes

Hinter dem Tod und dem Stacheldraht sehe ich einen Hohlweg, der allmählich ansteigt. Rechts und links dieses Weges liegt eine zauberhafte grüne Wiese mit Bäumen, die eine Art Allee bilden. Die Bäume zur Rechten, wunderschöne und mannigfaltig große Blüten [...]. Die Bäume zur Linken, knallrote Äpfel, die so groß sind, daß man sie mit zwei Händen umfassen muß (*Zwischen*, p. 78).

In this passage the path through the trees is one that will lead her away from death and barbed wire. The trees build a protective shelter along this path in the image that Franz constructs here. Reiter acknowledges the presence of descriptions of nature in many survivor accounts of concentration camp experiences and suggests that these images play such a large role in these texts because they were the only aesthetic experiences available to prisoners in the camps.<sup>55</sup> Noticing the environment beyond the gates of the camps as well as the patterns of the seasons gave them something from their past that they could cling to and was in some ways a source of comfort. Reiter says, 'in gewisser Weise scheint dies ihre Zuversicht in ihr Menschsein gestärkt zu haben. Kritik bedarf eines Selbstbewußtseins, das die Häftlinge gerade aus der affirmativen Versenkung in die Natur zurückzugewinnen hofften'.<sup>56</sup> Nature was one element that was still familiar even in the surreal environment of the concentration camps and could still be described and represented with language that was learned before the disruption and loss of voice experienced in the Holocaust. However, in the midst of the 'Meine Kindheit' section, Franz remembers her sister catching a beetle with a stick and pinning it to the ground. When her grandfather sees her sister do this, he reprimands her and calls attention to her cruelty: 'Versetze dich einmal in die Lage des Käfers, leg dich auf den Bauch, bohre dir den Stock in den Rücken. Wie findest du das? Das tut weh. Tiere darf man nie quälen, denn sie sind Gottes Geschöpfe' (*Zwischen*, p. 19). Franz's use of this memory and scene in her narrative acknowledges the potential cruelty and dangers involved with nature, perhaps particularly of people interacting with nature, foreshadowing the scenes of torture to come.

### 2.3.3 Identification / Connection

Franz's use of natural imagery and her affection for the villages, fields and woods of Germany can also be seen as a method of connection between herself and the other people living in the country she describes. Her love for the landscape of Germany is a safe bridge to readership.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Reiter, p. 142.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

The *Gadje*'s image of Romanies as a primitive people, untouched by modernisation and living on the land can be construed as a 'positive' stereotype<sup>57</sup> and as a level on which Romanies and non-Romanies can connect. This raises the question of caution in Franz's approach to recording her memories and asserting her belonging in the landscape of Germany. As Rosenhaft points out

anders als bei jüdische Displaced Persons hatten sie weder die Motivation auszuwandern noch gab es irgendwelche Institutionen, die für 'Zigeuner' ein neues Leben in einem anderen Land gefördert hätten. Sie suchten zerstreute Familienmitglieder zusammen und hofften, in ihren alten Heimatorten ihr Leben wieder aufzubauen, obwohl gerade dies ihnen selten gelang.<sup>58</sup>

The situation Rosenhaft outlines here is one that resonates in all of the texts examined in this thesis; all of the writers make it clear that there was no other option than to make their way back to where they had been before and do their best to start over there. This statement is confirmed in all of the Holocaust narratives examined in this thesis; Franz herself returns to Cologne in order to find family members and ultimately resumes her work as a musician after she first meets her husband and they form a band together. The difficulties of life after the camps are not detailed by Franz in her narrative, however. The short sections at the end devoted to relating what she did after her release were written by Reinhold Lehmann who describes Franz's family's experiences living in a car, looking for places to stay, poverty, and discrimination from the German authorities (*Zwischen*, p. 97). This is the environment into which Franz first ventured with her narrative. The moments of connection and empathy in her text can therefore be questioned in relation to the intended readership of her work, as she may feel the need to be cautious in her portrayal of the cruelty she endured.

Franz further establishes the binding of her individual identity with her homeland of Germany by highlighting moments of connection in her writing. In an abrupt end to the idyllic scenes of her childhood which begin the narrative, the second part starts with the title 'Mein Holocaust', showing the reader with astounding clarity all that was lost. With chapter names such as 'Rampe Auschwitz' and 'Meine Schwester hängt am Galgen,' the horror stands in gruesome contrast to what came before. However, even amongst these scenes of horror, she remembers moments of dialogue and interaction. In the chapter 'Ich werde abgeholt,' she recalls the kindness of a young SS man when she is told that she will be sent to Auschwitz.

Nach sekundenlangem Schweigen gibt er mir die Hand: 'Eine Frau wie du, ist nicht einfach sterblich. Es tut mir von ganzem Herzen leid. Ich bin mitschuldig geworden.' [...] Seitdem diese Worte gesprochen wurden, sind 40 Jahre vergangen. Aber ich weiß noch jedes Wort, die damals fiel (*Zwischen*, p. 55).

In her memories of Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Bergen Belsen, the horrible conditions, the terror and the cruelty inflicted on her and other inmates is related directly, but never with an

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<sup>57</sup>Tebbutt, 'From Scapegoats and Stereotypes to Self-Assertion', p. 10.

<sup>58</sup>Rosenhaft, 'Geschlecht des Misstrauens'.

accusatory tone. She also relates further instances of kindness from a Jewish doctor who kept her alive by dropping pieces of bread into her cell and a woman who gave Franz milk when she was imprisoned after her attempted escape, and the little girl whom she was able to spare from the gas chamber for a short while longer by hiding her under her dress. Ultimately, she is taken in by a man in uniform when she makes her final, successful escape from the camp near Wittenberge. Initially, she is afraid of him and begs him not to kill her. She remembers him saying: 'aber ich will Sie doch gar nicht töten, ich weiß, daß Sie aus dem KZ geflohen sind. Ich will Ihnen helfen' (*Zwischen*, p. 92). It is these moments of contact, connection and dialogue that are a particularly important part of her narrative. They are another way of inscribing Romani stories and memories in the history of Germany.

A persistent questioning of why events happened as they did pervades Franz's work as she attempts to write her memories and to abandon feelings of hate and revenge. She writes:

Seit vielen Jahren überlege ich, was Menschen dazu bringen konnte, Kinder über die Köpfe der Mütter hinweg in den Verbrennungsofen zu werfen und all die anderen Greueln. Warum wurden Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Himmler, Eichmann, Heydrich, Mengele u.a. so? Vielleicht hat das Elternhaus zu dem gestörten Verhältnis beigetragen. Wie mag das Verhältnis der Eltern zu ihren Kindern gewesen sein? Ob diese Menschen, die die Leute prügelten, zu Tode quälten, willkürlich erschossen, jemals Geborgenheit, Liebe erfahren haben? (*Zwischen*, p. 85)

Her use of the words 'Geborgenheit' and 'Liebe' are significant in that these are the key words and elements she is trying to hold up in her text as values of the Romani community, specifically targeting the criminal stereotype of the *Zigeuner*. She says herself in the opening of her narrative: 'Ich möchte anderen ein Lebenszeichen geben. Wenn ich einiges über die Liebe niederschreiben darf, was für manche vielleicht schlicht klingt, denn deshalb, weil ich das System des Nationalsozialismus in krassem Gegensatz dazu erlebte' (*Zwischen*, p. 10). These questions are mixed in with Franz's account of the concentration camps. They break up the chronological narrative, alerting the reader to the presence of the author, reminding them that the horror of these memories goes beyond what can be found in the text. Franz says simply, 'ich kann es einfach nicht schildern' (*Zwischen*, p. 85). However, despite this claim, she goes on to try to describe the cruelty and terror she endured.

Her continued attempts to convey these scenes through her writing reveal a resolve which demands that the reader confront these images with the knowledge that Franz's evocation of them still cannot come close to their reality. Assmann says of the difficulty of using words to express trauma: 'Sie entbehren der Schärfe, sie ätzen nicht, wie es jene Erinnerung tut, die nicht aufhört wehzutun'.<sup>59</sup> The inability of words to convey the pain of the memory is evoked in Franz's writing through the laboured sentences she uses to describe the crematorium :

Der Wettlauf gegen Tod und Wahnsinn geht weiter. Es öffnet sich die Tür. Ein Schrei der Verzweiflung. Es ist stockdunkel. Keine Sterne sind am Himmel. [...]

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<sup>59</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 260.

Plötzlich fallen dicke Tropfen vom Himmel. Die Kinder verstecken sich hinter den Müttern. Sie fühlen, daß ihre Herzen sterben müssen. Wir gehen weiter und weiter und stehen fast vor dem Ofen (*Zwischen*, p. 85).

At this point, the author breaks away from the immediacy of the scene, claiming inability to describe the rest of what happened, saying it is 'so maßlos, so schlimm' (*Zwischen*, p. 85). Her frustration at not being able to express the horror she faced reveals another dimension to the scene her words describe. I would argue that this passage does reveal a writer trying to squeeze something out of the hollowness of words: Franz does not simply say 'Sie fühlen, dass sie sterben müssen', but adds the raw image of the children's hearts dying. Franz juxtaposes this frustrated attempt to describe the suffering inflicted in the concentration camps alongside her questioning of how anyone could carry out such acts of aggression; thus, despite illustrating moments of connection with the *Gadje* throughout her text, she also presents her horror at the cruelty carried out by the perpetrators.

Améry writes from his own experience of travelling through Germany years after the end of the Second World War: 'Mir ist nicht wohl in diesem friedlichen, schönen, von tüchtigen und modernen Menschen bewohnten Lande'.<sup>60</sup> Améry's description of feeling *unwohl* in Germany jars with Franz's expression of Germany as Heimat or security. However, I would argue that Franz does not use her portrayals of moments of connection naively by forgetting that Germany had been a dangerous place for her. As the title of her narrative, *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* suggests, for Franz hatred and resentment are also present in this relationship. She remembers encountering her godmother, sick and dying, in one of the deportation wagons to Auschwitz:

Als ich meine Patin so leiden sehe, steigt in mir ein unbändiger Haß auf, und ich sage zu ihr: 'Ich werde denen nie verzeihen, die dich hierher gebracht haben und dir so viel Leid angetan haben, ich denke Tag für Tag, Nacht für Nacht, Stunde um Stunde nach, womit ich all diese Leute töten könnte, du kannst mir glauben, daß meine Rache unbeschreiblich sein wird (*Zwischen*, p. 82).

In this scene, her *Patin* urges Franz to let go of those feelings of revenge with biblical overtones: 'Verzichte auf Rache, verzeih denen, die uns peinigen; denn sie wissen ja nicht, was sie tun' (*Zwischen*, p. 82). However, it was not easy for Franz to forget her feelings of hatred and longing for revenge. She writes that 'Heute, nach fast 40 Jahren, denke ich wie sie' (*Zwischen*, p. 83). In including this dialogue with her *Patin*, Franz clearly indicates that moving past hatred was not a simple process; her reference in the previous quotations to forty years suggests a long journey to get to a point where she no longer felt the need for revenge. Her title, *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, clearly indicates that her feelings still occupy an in-between space. It is also important to note that, despite having reached this point, she still chooses to include that moment of hatred and desire for revenge in her narrative. She wants the reader to know that it was a process that had taken time; she states clearly the crime committed against her people in

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<sup>60</sup> Améry, p. 103.

having had their family members murdered and their identities taken away, emphasising that she had not even recognised her sister and *Patin* when she met them again in the camps because they were so ill and starved (*Zwischen*, p. 83).<sup>61</sup> Armed with the support of her Christian beliefs, Franz can resonate the words love and forgiveness in her text, but the scenes she chooses to reveal to the reader and the grief for lost family members indicate a determination to show her readership the acts that required a great deal of time and suffering to forgive.

Franz comments on the behaviour of other prisoners in the camps, often emphasising the solidarity among Romanies.

Unter den Deutschen im Lager gab es nicht die Solidarität wie bei uns, sie haben sich gegenseitig erschlagen, haben sich gegenseitig ihr Brot gestohlen und weiß Gott was alles dafür eingetauscht. Sie haben sich ausgeliefert. Es gab schreckliche Denunziationen, aber wir Zigeuner hielten immer zusammen (*Zwischen*, p. 74).

She goes on to say that the German prisoners fought and betrayed one another in order to survive and so she and the other Romanies in the camp did not want to have anything to do with them: 'Wir haben in diesen schweren Zeiten gelernt, wer wessen Freund war. Wir haben unser Blut gehört' (*Zwischen*, p. 75). The accuracy of these memories is perhaps subject to debate, but Franz's inclusion of this representation of Romanies in the camps is significant and suggests that her relationship with Germany as *Heimat* also relies on her Romani identity within that place. There is a dialogue with herself in this text, on the one hand reaching out to her German readership and trying to highlight the solidarity of Romanies before the Holocaust, a solidarity which carried through the camps, and on the other hand revealing moments of resentment towards the perpetrators. Franz remembers that they even sang and danced together to the amazement of the camp guards; she goes to great lengths to show the uniqueness of Romanies – to portray them as something better than what they were held to be. Although many elements of her narrative could be described as idealised (these moments of connection, her representation of a pure and provincial Germany), Franz does not ignore harsher realities. When she remembers herself in prison, awaiting deportation to Auschwitz, she tells of a bird that lands on the windowsill of her prison cell and imagines giving it a letter with a greeting for her mother. 'Aber die Wirklichkeit ist anders. Nie mehr wird meine Mutter eine Nachricht von mir erhalten' (*Zwischen*, p. 56).

These elements of nature which allow her to express certain facets of Romani identity (ones most likely be perceived positively by non-Romanies) and allow her to inscribe her own stories within the German landscape. She asserts her own belonging and these images provide comfort and *Geborgenheit*, a more universal concept of *Heimat* and belonging. A sense of common past and belonging and the necessity to assert a clear identification of the Romani people as one people with their origins in India is a common theme in Franz's writing as well as in

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<sup>61</sup> Compare with Karl Stojka's assertion that the biggest crime against Romanies in the Holocaust was the loss of family members and the Romani identity. See *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, p. 104.

Romani writing from other European countries.<sup>62</sup> This engagement with their ‘scientifically proven’ origin provides a sense of cohesion among the people in order to establish a group identity, though as will be shown with reference to Horvath’s *Katzenstreu* in Chapter 6, it also marks the historical beginning of the persecution of Romanies. Furthermore, it reveals a knowledge of and engagement with history. The importance and awareness of Indian origins is evident in the texts of Franz, Lessing, Ceija and Karl Stojka, Otto Rosenberg, and Horvath. Franz writes about this with pride: ‘Ich glaube, diese Flucht aus Indien, hat die Menschen doch zusammengekettet. Dieses Verlorensein in der Welt, wo andere Menschen einen nicht annehmen, wo man immer wieder weggestoßen wird. Das lässt uns eben zusammenhalten, das hat uns Zigeuner zusammengekettet. Wir denken anders. Wir fühlen anders’ (*Zwischen*, p. 17). Here, Franz emphasises these common roots and sense of uniqueness about her people. In addition, this engagement with history and a common identity combats the stereotypical figure of the *Zigeuner* as a mysterious figure with unknown, and thereby questionable, origins.<sup>63</sup> The assertion of this ethnic identity and origin and history provides space in Germany for this group with a clear sense of identity.

## 2.4 Narrating Experience

Franz’s assertion of Romani identity through memories of her Holocaust experiences and the life she remembers before, makes it an example of the ‘site for the exploration of new identities’ that Laura Marcus has identified as a quality of autobiography.<sup>64</sup> Franz’s position as a witness to the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust and the forced crisis of identity which resulted from this, enables her to testify to her own experiences while, crucially, also reflecting on other aspects of her life and Romani identity. We have seen that Franz uses her writing in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* to give personal insights into the lives of Romanies in Germany, a completely unique perspective, but also to explore her own creative and artistic abilities. Her memories of childhood are given through the eyes of the writer, the older woman who has survived these experiences. As discussed previously, the author is very much present throughout the narrative and her use of language plays a major role in the communication of her memories. She enters the time and the mindset of the woman who experienced the camps many years ago, but repeatedly steps back from these memories and gives the reader a glimpse of who she is now through her essay ‘Herbstliche Impressionen’ and through her *Vorwort*, which emphasises her Christian message of embracing love instead of hatred (*Zwischen*, p. 9). Franz orders her memories into a narrative which illustrates first the idealised view of life before the Holocaust, then the horrors of the camps and finally ends with the act of writing and

<sup>62</sup>See Breger, ‘Understanding the “Other”’, p. 138. See also Bengsch, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup>Breger, ‘Understanding the “Other”’, p. 138.

<sup>64</sup>Marcus, p. 281.

telling those memories.

Laura Marcus writes of the problem of genre and autobiography:

[S]pecific literary or narrative forms have provided, often problematically, structuring models for life-experience and its representation. [...] [W]ith the recent explosion of interest in life-histories and life-studies of all kinds, the literary, here represented by traditional autobiography, must necessarily appear as one genre among others in a broad interdisciplinary project.<sup>65</sup>

Franz's narrative could be said to follow a literary model progressing through a clear beginning, middle, and ending. In her childhood memories, she is the little girl who dances the Csardas and impresses her audience and most importantly, her family. As a prisoner in the concentration camps, she portrays herself as a fighter and survivor, looking after the little girl who hides under her skirt in order to avoid the gas chamber and in the end making a successful escape. She writes of one instance where she defies the SS Officers who want to give her the 'privilege' of not having her hair shorn and being put in the prostitution block:

Dann merke ich, mein Kreislauf rotiert. Ärger und Verzweiflung kommen in mir hoch. Ich reiße mein Lagerkleid auf und schreie verzweifelt. 'Nein, in den Puff gehe ich nicht, dann erschießt mich doch schon. Erschießt mich auf der Stelle'. Der SS-Mann ist erstaunt, ja schon verstört (*Zwischen*, p. 63).

This event in the narrative is so dramatic and perfectly timed, with Franz fitting into the role of the defiant heroine, that it could be read as a literary device, a myth or idealisation of the past. It cannot be proved to what extent this occurrence is fact or fiction, but I would argue that distinguishing it as one or the other is unimportant. Franz's representation of the Holocaust and the construction of her memories into a coherent piece of writing reveal much about her experiences, not only what she went through, but how she as an individual survived them and was able to work through the traumatic events. Tony Kushner points out that 'how individuals put together their lives in a coherent way tells us as much about their lives now as it does about their past experiences. All are bound together in creating the individual's identity'.<sup>66</sup> For Franz, this text seems not to be solely a way of working through trauma, but also a way to (re-) establish her identity as an artist.

Reiter describes the act of writing and forming memories into a coherent narrative as part of a 'Bewältigungsmodell' which allows the writer to construct a beginning, middle, and ending for the remembered events.<sup>67</sup> The Holocaust is often thought of as being beyond description, this idea perhaps most famously expressed in Theodor Adorno's statement in 1951: 'Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben ist barbarisch'.<sup>68</sup> Assmann writes about language and

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<sup>65</sup>Marcus, p. 233.

<sup>66</sup>Kushner, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup>Reiter, p. 69.

<sup>68</sup>Theodor Adorno 'Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft', in *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I: Prismen. Ohne Leitbild* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 30.

trauma: 'Sprache verhält sich dem Trauma gegenüber ambivalent: Es gibt das magische, das ästhetische, das therapeutische Wort, das wirksam und lebenswichtig ist, weil es den Schrecken bannt, und es gibt das blasse, verallgemeinernde und trivialisierende Wort, das die leere Hülse des Schreckens ist'.<sup>69</sup> This struggle with the duality of words, their meanings, and what they can express, is an important representation within the text itself. In the case of Philomena Franz and other Romani writers who are new to writing and turn to it after the trauma of the Holocaust, the words themselves and the way the text is presented is important.

Tony Kushner warns against the use of testimony as something that should fit neatly into history, stating, 'there would be a tragic irony if Holocaust testimony, with all its potential nuances, became integral to the telling of a story so polished that we actually lost sight of the individual in any meaningful sense'.<sup>70</sup> This statement suggests that too much emphasis placed on the historical facts of survivor testimony / writing risks jeopardising the individuality of the experience, the effects on memory and the articulation of trauma. What Kushner then seems to encourage is a testing of the boundaries that have been set in the use of testimony and acknowledging the exploration of identity that is part of the witness experience. He emphasises that more concentration is needed on the unique qualities of individual narratives, exploring life stories and the literary creative elements involved in constructing these stories. However, the question arises of what happens to truth and authenticity when a narrative attempting to bring attention to a historical event is written in a literary way rather than as a historical document. Does the filtering of these memories to fit into a coherent narrative take away from the recognition of the actual events they are meant to portray? Franz's use of visual and poetic language quite clearly takes her work beyond a historical document and some may say it idealises the situation. For example, in her chapter 'Ich werde abgeholt', she writes:

Am Abend sehe ich durch das kleine Fenster den Gefängnishof unter der weißen Schneedecke liegen. Der Mond am Himmel ist für mich wie eine große Laterne. Er spendet Licht für diese ungerechte Welt. Wer hat uns verboten, wer bestimmt, daß wir nicht aus dem Fenster sehen dürfen? Ich bin ein Vogel, kann nicht fliegen. Man hat mir die Flügel gestutzt. Am Fenster vorbei fliegt ein Drossel, läßt sich nieder (*Zwischen*, p. 56).

The images the writer Franz paints in this passage are so vivid and clear that it is almost possible to forget the context of the scene she is describing.

The literary cannot be ignored in Franz's narrative, but what implications does this have on how it should be read? There are few German Romani accounts of the Holocaust to compare the experiences Franz describes with, and so it seems impossible to conduct a fair study revealing its truths and fictions. So little has been written about the Romani Holocaust, and those studies that have been published have mostly been written by non-Romanies. This fact places an

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<sup>69</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 260.

<sup>70</sup> Kushner, p. 50.



enormous responsibility on the few Romanies who have written and published work, especially concerning the Holocaust, to document truth and historical experience.

The expression of group identity in Franz's work is also characteristic of current trends in autobiographical writing. 'There is', Laura Marcus comments, 'an immense scope for exploration of the ways in which women, and other marginalised groups, have used autobiographical writings as a way of writing histories that would otherwise be omitted from the records'.<sup>71</sup> While Franz's text focuses on her experiences in the concentration camps, writing a history which is in danger of being forgotten, she also provides her readership with insights into Romani life in order to combat existing widespread stereotypes. Her memories of her childhood are characterised by the togetherness of family, the telling of stories or fairy tales, going to school and her interactions with non-Romanies. Her purpose is to create a picture of Romani life that is different from the popular stereotypes of Romanies as criminals or romantic wanderers. As previously mentioned, there are very few first-hand accounts of Romani life, and so it is impossible to ignore the question of truth and authenticity in Franz's representation of group identity. Ian Hancock stresses the injustice of non-Romanies' contributions to the writing of Romani history, saying

[w]hile hundreds of poems, plays, operas and novels have been written with Roma characters or themes, virtually none of them have been written by Roma themselves, and fewer still by writers with any real acquaintance with the Romani people. This resulted in the emergence, over the years, of a literary, fictitious 'Gypsy' image, and an equally unreal history.<sup>72</sup>

Romani writing, for the Romani community is a very important way of asserting a more positive group identity. Franz writes her own personal history in order to offer an alternative to this 'fictitious "Gypsy" image'. She emphasises the importance of solidarity and unity within families and among Romani groups themselves. This solidarity is presented in her text with what could be called an idealised view of the way Romani prisoners treated each other in the camps in comparison to the way others handled one another.<sup>73</sup> There is a constant interaction between the author writing a history that needs to be written and the author writing her own story that wants to be written. The urgency to bear witness and the resulting reflection on Romani identity are both crucial elements of Franz's text.

Different theoretical approaches to testimony and autobiography lead back to the issue of defining these genres and being aware of where they overlap. Also very important are the expectations of the reader and the genres or models which writers use to meet these expectations.

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<sup>71</sup>Marcus, p. 269.

<sup>72</sup>Hancock, *The Roads of the Roma*, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup>For further discussion of these moments of solidarity in Franz's text, see the 'Gender' section of this chapter. For contrasting views on the existence of Romani solidarity in the camps, see Karl Stojka's *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, Mongo Stojka's *Papierene Kinder* and Otto Rosenberg's *Das Brennglas*.

LaCapra writes of the problematic issue of representing trauma in history by illustrating that trauma disrupts genres and threatens to collapse distinctions. He writes that

the problem here is how one tries to inscribe and bind trauma and attendant anxiety in different genres or disciplinary areas in spite of the fact that no genre or discipline 'owns' trauma as a problem or can provide definitive boundaries for it.<sup>74</sup>

Although the written representation of trauma has been associated with postmodern ideas of rupture, silence, and unspeakability, Franz's texts draw on more traditional ways of storytelling to illustrate the traumatic events of her past as well as to record history. It is important to recall here the point that Tony Kushner has made in regard to attending to victims' voices. He states that '[u]ltimately, it is important to accept that how we remember the Holocaust, including through the various genres of victim testimony, "is not against history but part of a process of inserting memory into history"'.<sup>75</sup> This need not entirely leave the question of truth unaddressed. LaCapra comments that 'truth claims are necessary but not sufficient conditions of historiography. A crucial question is how they do and ought to interact with other factors or forces in historiography, in other genres and in hybridized forms or modes'.<sup>76</sup> Therefore it is of great importance to free victims from the pressure of conforming to any rigid definition of genre, of fitting neatly into a coherent history, and to recognise that the representation of trauma invites and perhaps even requires the blurring of these boundaries.

This dissolving of genre boundaries is well represented in Philomena Franz's text through exploration of identity in her representation of her own traumatic experiences of the Holocaust. The fairy tales she chooses to include in the 2001 edition of *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* are a good example of how Franz is not afraid to challenge the constraints of accepted Holocaust representation. Written in response to her son being ostracised at school, Franz's didactic fairy tales focus on the consequences of abusing power and the treatment of people and wildlife who are in some way 'different'. At the core of these stories is the theme of surviving against the odds and rising above persecution and victimhood. Some might say that the images in her *Zigeunermärchen* only affirm the romantic stereotypes,<sup>77</sup> but I would argue that she subverts this through the act of writing them. The fairy tales are related to her experiences in the Holocaust and their moral messages are very much about the dangers of stereotypes, hatred and persecution. With these stories, Franz crosses another genre boundary, again with the purpose of asserting individual as well as Romani group identity. These fairy tales, representing Franz's memories of the horror of the concentration camps through different characters and scenery,

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<sup>74</sup>LaCapra, p. 96.

<sup>75</sup>Kushner, p. 50.

<sup>76</sup>LaCapra, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup>Solms writes about the traditional role of the *Zigeuner* in German fairy tales, specifically collections of *Zigeunermärchen* and their contribution to the negative image of Romanies in German society in 'Fairy Tales' pp. 91-106.

are another way of working through trauma. She uses an approach to writing them that we have learned through her narrative was a familiar way of storytelling from her childhood, that of telling any kind of life experience through fairy tales (or other stories). La Capra writes of the different ways of representing and working through trauma:

But one may argue that such memory, including memory that confronts the traumatic dimensions of history, is ethically desirable in coming to terms with the past both for the individual and for the collectivity. It is bound up with one's self-understanding and with the nature of a public sphere, including the way a collectivity comes to represent its past in its relation to its present and future.<sup>78</sup>

Franz's very different representation through the medium of fairy tales needs to be recognised and valued as another way of illustrating memories and telling life histories. Laura Marcus urges readers 'to remember that the desire to keep fact and fiction separate has often stemmed from the ideological demand that history should not be contaminated by fictional productions'.<sup>79</sup> It is important therefore to explore further the constantly changing boundaries between autobiography, fiction, and testimony in terms of representing trauma and history as well as the exploration of identity. Franz exercises the autobiographical dimension of the witness experience in this text, by representing her unique experiences and making an individual contribution to Romani collective memory.

Also included in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* is an essay by Wolfgang Benz giving a brief overview of the persecution and victimisation of the Sinti and Roma in the Third Reich, lending scholarly credence to the experiences Franz describes. Laura Marcus, in writing about the emergence of slave narratives and autobiographies by black women, emphasises that 'the irony is that works rendered acceptable in the first instance by editorial appropriation were subsequently discounted as autobiographies for the very same reason'.<sup>80</sup> The padding of Franz's text with contributions from non-Romani scholars or writers was presumably done to make the work as a whole more acceptable and accessible for readers. However, it also raises questions as to how the book should be read in terms of the author's assertion of group and individual identity within her own writing. Another point Marcus raises is in regard to the readership of slave narratives:

The tension within their autobiographies is that they were written for readers with some social influence; this would automatically have excluded black women. The literal truth of their writings is compromised, or subverted, by their ambiguous relationship towards their putative readers.<sup>81</sup>

This point could also be made in reference to Franz's text. It was written in German with a specific readership in mind: non-Romanies and Romanies of political and social influence who

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<sup>78</sup>LaCapra, pp. 95-96.

<sup>79</sup>Marcus, p. 258.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, p. 289.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, p. 290.

campaign for Romani rights. It focuses on a specific readership which does not necessarily include those Romanies she professes to represent, therefore prompting questions regarding the authenticity of this representation.

## 2.5 Reception Context

Authorship is another key element in the issue of representing truth and authenticity in life histories. As is the case with many writers representing marginalised groups who have produced autobiographies and other creative expressions of group and individual identities, Philomena Franz's book was published with the aid and support of 'outsiders'. Franz's Holocaust narrative is concluded by a few short chapters by Reinhold Lehmann which imitate Franz's writing style and detail her battle with depression and the difficulties she had in claiming restitution; the afterword is also by Lehmann. It is therefore questionable how much of a hand this editor had in the formation of Franz's text as a whole. Lehmann, a writer from Munich, has also published other works dealing with the Holocaust and personal narratives of Holocaust experiences.<sup>82</sup> In 1985, Franz's memories were first published as her own narrative, ending after the 'Mein Holocaust' section.<sup>83</sup> In the 2001 edition of her work, more of her own writing was included with the addition of three fairy tales and the essay 'Herbstliche Impressionen'.<sup>84</sup> It is difficult to say any more about the role of the editor in the actual writing because no information is given regarding the formation of the text. However, it is possible to conjecture that he may have advised Franz as to the structure of the book, perhaps encouraging her to write it as a coherent chronological narrative.<sup>85</sup>

Franz's text has received little scholarly recognition and only achieved a larger status of public recognition after its promotion when Franz won her prize in 2001. This honour prompted the writing of many articles in newspapers on Franz's life, but I have not found any that treated the text in any significant way. Most of the articles were summaries of Franz's memories along with some interviews with Franz herself. The most quoted line in all of these articles is, 'Wenn

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<sup>82</sup>See, for example, Reinhold Lehmann, *Du wirst leben und dich rächen: die Geschichte des Juden Zwi Michaeli* (Munich: List, 1992) and Bartoszewski Wladyslaw and Reinhold Lehmann, *Es lohnt sich, anständig zu sein: meine Erinnerungen mit der Rede zum 8. Mai* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995).

<sup>83</sup>In 1988, Michael Albus published a book called *Philomena Franz: die Liebe hat den Tod besiegt* as part of a series called *Lebens-Wege*, emphasising the Christian aspect of the text in forgiveness and love conquering these horrific memories. Michael Albus, *Philomena Franz: die Liebe hat den Tod besiegt* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1988).

<sup>84</sup>Franz, *Zwischen* (2001), pp. 126-147.

<sup>85</sup>In the foreword to the translation of Otto Rosenberg's *Das Brennglas* titled *A Gypsy in Auschwitz*, trans. by Helmut Bögler (London: London House, 1999), it is indicated that structural and chronological elements had been changed in the original transcription of the oral narrative into a written publication. See also Thomas W. Neumann and Michael Zimmermann's 'Editorischer Hinweis' in Walter Stanoski Winter, *WinterZeit. Erinnerungen eines deutschen Sinto, der Auschwitz überlebt hat*, ed. by Thomas W. Neumann and Michael Zimmermann (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1999), p. 101. Here, Zimmermann and Neumann also indicate that the published text was 'stilistisch leicht geändert worden' in terms of chronology and with the editing of repetitions within the oral testimony.

wir hassen, verlieren wir. Wenn wir lieben, werden wir reich'. In articles written in *Die Zeit*, *Freitag*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and many others, this is the line that makes up the basis of the article, highlighting Franz's work in schools and communities.<sup>86</sup> I would argue that Franz's text needs to be taken more seriously as a piece of writing as well as Holocaust testimony. Few of these articles stress or even mention that this work is significant as the first of its kind, written by a German Romani woman, nor is the significance of the step from oral tradition to a written text and its connection with the Holocaust addressed. In Eder's *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden*, she maps the beginnings of Romani writing in Europe and includes Franz's book in a section dealing with KZ- autobiographies.<sup>87</sup> Here, Eder provides the first significant scholarly treatment of Franz's work and highlights the quality of Franz's writing in expressing the horrors of the concentration camps:

Diese Unterbrechungen in der Berichterstattung in Form von Reflexionen, die durch das Fehlen jeglicher Aggressivität gekennzeichnet sind, in Abwechslung mit den einfachen Sätzen, die den Handlungsverlauf schildern und ständig den Eindruck vermitteln, die Autorin hält sich zurück, sie wüßte noch viel Grausameres zu sagen, aber sie bringt die Worte nicht zu Papier—dieses Wechselspiel fördert die erschütternde Wirkung des Berichts.<sup>88</sup>

In Eder's study, Franz is read and considered with the scholarly respect her writing deserves, but her work should be recognised and dealt with beyond this very specific readership and be considered within the field of Holocaust narratives. It is also worth noting that in the memorial sites of Ravensbrück and Oranienburg today, Franz's text is not among the survivor accounts sold in their bookstores.<sup>89</sup>

Franz, in writing her text, may have been under pressure from certain groups in its construction. She writes of her intention in putting the book together. 'Ich wünsche mir vom ganzen Herzen, daß dieses kleine Buch dazu beiträgt, die Wiederholung von Geschehnissen zu verhindern, die man bei uns in Deutschland 'Vergangenheit' nennt. Die Wahrheit ist schmerzlich, aber nur mit ihr können wir unser Glück aufbauen' (*Zwischen*, p. 9). She hereby states an intention of reporting the truth of what happened to Romanies in Germany and adding to the collective memory of the Holocaust. Maurice Halbwachs comments that in reflecting on one's own past, a discourse on the events of the past becomes necessary:

This means to perceive in what happens to us a particular application of facts concerning which social thought reminds us at every moment of the meaning and impact these facts have for it. In this way, the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>See: Gerd Kröncke, 'Das Schicksal der Zigeunerin Philomena Franz: Deutsch-Stunde Hoffnungsthal', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 October 1985, p. 3; Christian Schmidt-Häuer, 'Häftling Nr. 10550', *Die Zeit*, November 2001: [http://zeus.zeit.de/text/archiv/2001/11/200111\\_kl\\_geschichte.p.xml](http://zeus.zeit.de/text/archiv/2001/11/200111_kl_geschichte.p.xml) [accessed on 2 March 2006]; Petra Löber, 'Wenn wir hassen, verlieren wir: ein Leben für Verständigung', *Freitag*, 9 March 2001, pp. 1-3.

<sup>87</sup>See Eder, *Geboren*, pp. 124-127.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid, pp. 124-5.

<sup>89</sup>This was the case when I visited each of these camps in October, 2006.

<sup>90</sup>Halbwachs, p. 52.

Franz's work fits well into the context of the contemporary Romani rights movement in Germany, which stresses the importance of dispelling the widespread 'Zigeuner' stereotypes and receiving appropriate recognition for the events of the Holocaust.

Franz's text has been well received as a document of the suffering Romanies endured in the Holocaust. However, it is more difficult to assess what the reaction of other Romanies has been as there has been very little research done on this. Because the Romani population in Germany is so spread out and many Romanies deny their background, it would be difficult to conduct a realistic survey of Romani opinions regarding Franz's work or contemporary Romani writing. It is useful here to consider the fate of Bronislawa Wajs (1910-1987), a Polish Romani poet known by the name 'Papusza' who wrote poetry inspired by the music and lyrics of her family. She also wrote of her experiences of Nazi persecution in the Holocaust. Her poetry was published by Jerzy Ficowski and was well received in Poland. After Ficowski published a book about the history and culture of the Roma, Papusza was ostracised by her family and shunned by her people for giving away secrets of their life to the outsiders.<sup>91</sup> Franz's texts, however, have been welcomed by the visible Romani community because they bring to light the victimisation of the Romanies in the Holocaust and could be said to serve a political purpose.

## 2.6 'Orte erschaffen'

Franz's decision to write her memories of her experiences in the Holocaust provided an important precedent. It demanded space in history, literature and academia in which to represent her own suffering and the victimisation of Romanies in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. It also opened up the method of writing as a mode of communication and dialogue with the *Gadje*. Franz, through her unique use of language and genre to represent her experiences of horror and her representations of her relationship with the concept of Heimat and experiences of the camps as a Romani woman, asserts the need for space in German and Romani history, demanding this history be heard and written.

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<sup>91</sup>See Reemtsma, pp. 78-82 for a discussion of Papusza's poetry and examples of her work.

## Chapter 3

# Voicing Trauma and Establishing Place: Ceija Stojka's Autobiographical Writing

Ceija Stojka's autobiographical writing broke new ground in Austrian literary representations of the Holocaust. As the first Austrian Romani to write of her own and her family's suffering in the concentration camps of the Third Reich, Stojka offered a new perspective and a voice for Romani victims who had long been ignored in Austria. Four years before Romani Rights organisations finally won their battle for Romanies to be recognised as an ethnic group in Austria,<sup>1</sup> Stojka published her first book, *Wir Leben im Verborgenen: Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin* (1988).<sup>2</sup> Her first autobiographical account illustrates the atrocities she endured as a child in the concentration camps; she focuses particularly on the loss of family members murdered in the camps: her father was arrested by the Gestapo, imprisoned, and subsequently killed in Dachau from where his ashes were mailed to his family,<sup>3</sup> and her younger brother Ossi was five years old when he was killed in Auschwitz.<sup>4</sup> Her second book, *Reisende auf dieser Welt: aus dem Leben einer Rom-Zigeunerin* (1992),<sup>5</sup> describes her life after the liberation of the camps. The book illustrates the hardships of being a single mother of three, trying to make a living by travelling through Austria from market to market. Central to her second narrative

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<sup>1</sup>Turner, p. xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ceija Stojka. *Wir leben im Verborgenen: Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin*, 4th edn (Vienna: Picus, 2003), originally published by Picus in 1988. Hereafter cited as *Verborgenen*.

<sup>3</sup>Stojka, *Verborgenen*, p. 19. This memory of receiving their father's ashes in the mail is also recorded in the narrative of Stojka's brothers, Mongo and Karl. See Mongo Stojka, *Papierene Kinder: Glück, Zerstörung und Neubeginn einer Roma-Familie in Österreich* (Vienna: Molden, 2000), p. 84 and Karl Stojka, *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause: Das Leben und Reisen eines Rom-Zigeuners* (Vienna: Picus, 1994), p. 36.

<sup>4</sup>For a specific comparison of the three siblings' accounts of the Holocaust in terms of the effects of trauma and gender on individual memory, see Lorely French 'An Austrian Family Remembers: Trauma and Gender in Autobiographies by Ceija, Karl and Mongo Stojka' in *German Studies Review*, 31 1 (2008), 65-86.

<sup>5</sup>Ceija Stojka, *Reisende auf dieser Welt: aus dem Leben einer Rom-Zigeunerin* (Vienna: Picus, 1992). Hereafter cited as *Reisende*.

is another traumatic event of her life: the loss of her youngest son to drug addiction. Stojka's pain and distress at these events are made apparent to the reader through the immediacy of the memories, which are conveyed through Stojka's choice of narrative voice for these texts: the child's voice in the first book and the voice of a mother in the second.

Like Franz, Stojka strongly suggests that, for her, writing provided the release which her traumatic memories demanded: 'Die Gefühle kommen raus. Wie ein Tropfen Blut. Es ist ganz wichtig, daß man die Angst niederschreibt und das Leid niederschreibt [...] überhaupt sich zu öffnen'.<sup>6</sup> The act of opening oneself, of releasing fears and suffering onto paper as Stojka describes here, fits well with Dominick LaCapra's concept of 'working through' trauma.<sup>7</sup> As a child, her fascination with letters and words was already strong, but the impulse to write her memories down in spite of having very little formal knowledge of *how* to do so arose, she says, from the need to have a patient listener and to have a way of expressing and, crucially, preserving her memories. She says of the importance of writing: 'Wenn man in sich etwas trägt und man hat nicht das gegenüber wo man eher scheu ist [...] Man kann leichter reden mit einem Blatt Papier'.<sup>8</sup> Stojka's words point to the interesting issue of security in writing, in having the paper absorb these memories first; this observation alerts the reader to a certain caution involved in the writing, the publication, and the distribution of these memories. The breaking of silence and the publishing of her narratives carry more responsibility than the release of words onto paper; I would argue that Stojka was indeed aware that the Romani Holocaust was being forgotten and avoided in Austria and that her narratives are a clear way of articulating her own memories and the Romani memory of the Holocaust so they might become part of Austrian cultural memory. Stojka's publication of a narrative that she describes as a sort of therapeutic exercise alongside her engagement in Romani rights activism raises the question of why it was important for her to publish and to continue writing. Her assertion of writing as a way of working through trauma and her emphasis on its therapeutic quality, must be explored further in the context of her representation of Romani identity and collective memory. Stojka's work provided an important precedent in Austria, offering other Romanies the courage to write and to publicise their writing. Stojka remarked on the number of Romani writers emerging after the publication of her first narrative: 'Sie sind wie Blätter vom Baum gefallen'.<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter I will investigate the motivations behind Stojka's writing, which, upon publication, contributed to the force of a group identity. Here again, the idea of locating space resonates as it did in Franz's texts. The key elements of establishing identity through the construction of writing which deals with the themes of trauma, Heimat and belonging will be explored here primarily in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, but also with reference to *Reisende auf*

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<sup>6</sup>Ceija Stojka, Personal Interview. 7 July, 2007.

<sup>7</sup>LaCapra, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.



*dieser Welt* in order to explore Stojka's assertion that 'ohne Schreiben ist nichts möglich'.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.1 The Author

Ceija Stojka was born on May 23, 1933 in a guest house in the Austrian Steiermark to a family of travelling Lovara Romanies who have lived in Austria since the 19th century.<sup>11</sup> In 1938, after restrictions were imposed on travelling, her father converted their wagon into a small house and the family settled in the sixteenth district of Vienna. Stojka, her mother and four of her siblings were among the few survivors of an extended family of over a hundred people.<sup>12</sup> Since the publication of her first book in 1988, Stojka has become a well-known Romani activist through her art exhibitions and her subsequent publications, including a narrative specifically about her memories of Bergen-Belsen, *Träume ich, daß ich lebe?* (2005), a collection of poetry: *Meine Wahl zu Schreiben: Ich kann es nicht* (2003) and a catalogue to accompany her paintings in which she remembers Auschwitz through the mode of another art form, *Bilder und Texte* (1995).<sup>13</sup> Excerpts from these works as well as other shorter pieces of prose and poetry have been published in numerous magazines and collections.<sup>14</sup>

An honorary member of Romano Centro, she has become well known throughout Austria and is perhaps the most popular figure representing Romani culture in Austria.<sup>15</sup> In August, 2000, Stojka was awarded the 'Josef-Felder Preis für Gemeinwohl und Zivilcourage' in honour of her work.<sup>16</sup> Stojka has also been the subject of two films by Karin Berger, *Ceija Stojka* (2000) and *Unter den Brettern Hellgrünes Gras* (2005). Karin Berger, a freelance writer living in Vienna, was putting together a piece on female survivors on the Holocaust and discovered Ceija Stojka's writing when she visited her to conduct an interview. Stojka remembers Berger's interest in her writing during that visit: 'Da wollte sie [Karin Berger] wissen wie das aussieht. Ja, sie hat sich dieses Manuskript mitgenommen. Nach zwei Tagen hat sie dann weinend angerufen und hat gesagt, das muß raus. Also sie konnte meine Schrift total lesen.'<sup>17</sup> Karin Berger says of Ceija Stojka: 'Durch Ceija habe ich auch die Großzügigkeit und Gastfreundschaft der Roma kennengelernt und ihre faszinierende Kunst des Erzählens. [...] [J]edesmal nahmen mich ihre schillernden Erzählungen gefangen, brachten mir eine bisher unbekannte

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Uta Beth, 'Der Schritt aus dem Verborgenen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24 August 2000, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Mongo Stojka, *Papierene Kinder*, p. 248.

<sup>13</sup>Ceija Stojka, *Bilder und Texte 1989-1995*, ed. by P. Meier-Rogan (Vienna: Graphische Kunstanstalt Otto Sares, 1995); Ceija Stojka, *Meine Wahl zu Schreiben: Ich kann es nicht* (EYE Verlag, 2003); Ceija Stojka, *Träume ich, daß ich lebe?* (Vienna: Picus, 2005). Stojka, Ceija. *Auschwitz ist mein Mantel Bilder und Texte [ein Projekt des Vereins Exil in Kooperation mit dem Verein Kulturzentrum Spittelberg]* (Vienna: Ed. Exil, 2008).

<sup>14</sup>See Archive of the magazine *Romano Centro*, published by Romano Centro, Vienna for fairy tales and poetry by Ceija Stojka. Selected poems can also be found in *Österreichischer Lyrik, und Kein Wort Deutsch: Zeitgenössischer Dichtung der Minoritäten*, ed. by Gerald Nitsche (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1990).

<sup>15</sup>Eder-Jordan, 'Ausbruch aus der Anonymität', p. 65.

<sup>16</sup>Beth, p. 20.

<sup>17</sup>Stojka, Interview.

Welt nahe'.<sup>18</sup> The invitation into an unfamiliar world, as Berger describes it, is important in Stojka's work. She seems to aim for achieving the opening of a dialogue between Austrian Romanies and other Austrians through her writing. It is crucial to consider her work in light of the traditional absence of such a dialogue; the initial negative reactions of her family and friends towards her writing and the position of Romanies as a 'minority' in Austria have kept alive Stojka's fear that 'Auschwitz might just be sleeping'.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Franz, Ceija Stojka says much about her process of writing and giving her memories to the public. For this reason, it is possible to analyse her texts in terms of her intentions and to look beyond her confidence in the therapeutic powers of the written word to the political intentions that reveal themselves through these words.

## 3.2 Trauma and Identity

### 3.2.1 Writing Memory

Ceija Stojka was well known in the Romani community for her songs and stories even before she first published her writing.<sup>20</sup> The transition from oral storytelling to writing came in the attempt to relate her memories of the Holocaust. As discussed previously in relation to Franz's work, Assmann's idea of 'Orte erschaffen', in which victims can find peace, is one which is central to Romani writing and representation of the Holocaust.<sup>21</sup> Due to marginalisation in terms of official recognition as victims, the need to create, within memory, the space for Romani memories and experiences and victims had become a matter of urgency.<sup>22</sup> Reiter has pointed out that a loss of identity is often experienced through a loss of language and draws attention to the difficulty involved in expression in narration when there has been a breakdown in a sense of identity.<sup>23</sup> When a clear concept of self-identity has been destroyed, this can result in the silencing of statements of belief, memories and assertions of belonging, place, family or history. For Stojka, the medium of writing provides a way of articulating her trauma; she remembers her childhood fascination with letters and how she practiced writing in the dirt of Bergen-Belsen: 'Ich hab auch im KZ die Erde hochgerippelt,' Stojka remembers, 'und dann Buchstaben reingemacht, so daß ich die Buchstaben nicht vergessen habe. Aber mehr wie *Oma, Haus, Maus*'<sup>24</sup>.

Assmann writes of the importance of family and history in individual memory, emphasising

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<sup>18</sup>Karin Berger in Stojka, *Verborgenen*, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup>See preface of Ceija Stojka, *Bilder und Texte 1989-1995*.

<sup>20</sup>This information was told to me by Renate Erich and Mozes Heinschink in a discussion at the Romano Centro in Vienna on May 10, 2007.

<sup>21</sup>Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 260.

<sup>22</sup>cf. Thurner, pp. 1-6 and 128-129.

<sup>23</sup>Reiter, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Stojka, Interview.

the role that families play in keeping their lost loved ones present through memory and rituals of memory. 'Die Familie ist die paradigmatische Gemeinschaft, die ihre Toten inkorporiert', she writes, 'auch wenn sie an dieser Aufgabe immer wieder zerbricht'.<sup>25</sup> The existential sense of the family structure in Romani communities is revealed in Stojka's text when she asserts that she would never want to leave Austria because it is the land where her ancestors are buried; their bodies in the soil, along with her family's history of travelling through the country, provide her with a claim to her own space in Austria. This is a particularly Romani way of marking her text in her expression of the connection she still feels with her ancestors and the influence they continue to have on the world.<sup>26</sup> For Stojka and other Romani families, the loss of relatives in the camps also meant an interruption or break in narration of experience. Stories and histories were lost along with their tellers in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. However, the loss of family and thereby family identity also brought with it the obligation to keep alive the memory of those who were lost (in Stojka's case, particularly her father and her younger brother, Ossi); a new medium of expression for Stojka presented itself in the form of writing. Through the publication of her narrative, Stojka contributes to the breaking of silence surrounding Romani victimisation in the Holocaust and thereby makes her own mark on the establishment of a collective Romani identity.

Assmann has pointed out the particular significance of first articulations of trauma from those whose personal stories of remembered trauma had long been muted in official historical discourse. She writes: 'In Ermangelung von Archiven und anderen staatlichen Institutionen der Vergangenheitsbewahrung brachen diese vergessenen Geschichten in der Form von Erinnerungen in die Gegenwart ein, auf denen neue kollektive Identitäten gegründet wurden'.<sup>27</sup> The first articulation in written form of the trauma of the Holocaust from the Austrian Romani perspective calls for the victimisation of Romanies to be remembered as part of Austrian history and contributes to the formation of a new Romani identity in Austria.<sup>28</sup> Stojka's work and her many publications and collections of her artwork convey this urgency to communicate the history that has not been adequately recognised or remembered.

The images of her small brother dying, the arrest of her father, and the memory of the atrocities she witnessed and experienced in the concentration camps never faded for Stojka and

<sup>25</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006) p. 22. Hereafter referred to as *Vergangenheit*.

<sup>26</sup> On this aspect of Romani culture, see Reemtsma, pp. 60-61 and Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> Assmann, *Vergangenheit*, p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> As previously discussed, this collective Romani identity is problematic given the many different groups that make up the Romani population in Austria and in other Central and Western European countries. See D. Halwachs, 'Roma and Romani in Austria', pp. 145-173. See also: Susan Tebbutt, 'Germany and Austria: The "Mauer im Kopf" or virtual wall', in *Between Past and Future: the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe* (Hatfield: U of Hertfordshire P, 2001), pp. 268-284; Reimar Gilsenbach, 'Multikulti- von den Roma seit alters vorgelebt, von den Deutschen jüngst als Neuwort erfunden', in *Music, Language and Literature of the Roma and Sinti*, ed. by Max Peter Baumann (Berlin: VWB, 2000), pp. 85-97.

she was plagued by nightmares ‘vom Stacheldraht, vom Gestöhne und Schreien der Menschen’ (*Verborgenen*, 105). In addition to remarking on the relief the release of these memories onto the patient page gave her, she notes that she was also spurred to write down her memories because she saw that they should have been recognised and taken into account by Austrian society.

Die jüdische Gesellschaft brachte Bücher raus und Filme und alles mögliche, [...] aber es kam von Zigeunern immer nur ‘Zigeuner waren auch im KZ’. Das war mir zu wenig. So wollte ich das nicht haben, so wollte ich nicht weiterleben, denn in mein’ Innerem war so viel zerstört und es hätte mich zerdrückt mit den Lügen zu leben mit dem, was man uns alles auftischt: wer wir sind und was wir sind.<sup>29</sup>

Stojka uses her writing not only as a way to overcome trauma, but also to express her own identity as a writer and to establish a positive group identity for Romanies. Assmann writes that ‘das Gedächtnis als Zusammenhalt unserer Erinnerungen wächst also ähnlich wie die Sprache von außen in den Menschen hinein, und es steht daher außer Frage, dass die Sprache auch seine wichtigste Stütze ist’.<sup>30</sup> Language plays an important role in remembering and making sense of isolated memories; as Assmann indicates, the articulation of memories through language importantly allows their continuity as part of a network of memory.<sup>31</sup> Stojka contributes to the collective memory of Austria by interjecting her own individual memories of the Romani Holocaust into public discourse where the collective experience of the Romani Holocaust was being excluded.

In her recorded discussions with Karin Berger, Stojka reveals the isolation she experienced which played a large role in her writing her memories down. Although her family had gone through terror and persecution, their response to these experiences was silence and a disinclination to discuss memories of that time with Stojka. ‘Und mit meinen Brüdern und Schwestern war es schwierig’, she remembers. ‘Nein, wir haben es eh erlebt, sagen sie, wir wollen damit nichts mehr zu tun haben. [...] Und dann hab ich [...] mir gesagt, ich muß alleine damit fertig werden’ (*Verborgenen*, 99). The forced isolation with her memories and the impotency of the oral tradition in recalling the Holocaust because of the lack of interaction with other listeners and speakers was part of what led her to make the significant step from oral storytelling to writing. The idea of collective memory that Halbwachs has put forth is based on a social memory that stays alive through communication and exchange.<sup>32</sup> To this end, oral tradition and communication could be considered useful, but Stojka suggests that this communication rarely took place, largely due to a sense of shame felt by Romanies at the humiliations they had experienced in the camps and because of the delay in their official recognition as a group, as

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<sup>29</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>30</sup>Assmann, *Vergangenheit*, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. See also M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 52.

<sup>32</sup>M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 50. See also Assmann, *Vergangenheit*, pp. 29-31.

victims of the Holocaust and as citizens of Austria.<sup>33</sup> Thurner points out that

the fear of Gypsies to call attention to themselves by their demands as victims of National Socialism was not unfounded. Already in 1948, security agencies and federal police authorities were notified that the 'Gypsy vermin already makes itself known again in an unpleasant way' and that 'Gypsies, in order to make an impression with the population, often identify themselves as concentration camp victims'.<sup>34</sup>

The 'anti-social' and 'criminal' labels with which Romanies were branded in the Third Reich and the continued prejudice they faced in their home countries after the end of the war contributed to a sense of helplessness and shame among Romanies that resulted in their caution in speaking out about their experiences in the concentration camps.<sup>35</sup>

Stojka has indicated that writing down her memories was at first very personal for her (*Verborgenen*, p. 97). The idea of isolation leading to writing is one that Walter Benjamin expresses in his essay 'Der Erzähler':

Die Geburtskammer des Romans ist das Individuum in seiner Einsamkeit, das sich über seine wichtigsten Anliegen nicht mehr exemplarisch auszusprechen vermag, selbst unberaten ist und keinen Rat geben kann.[...] Mitten in der Fülle des Lebens und durch die Darstellung dieser Fülle bekundet der Roman die tiefe Ratlosigkeit des Lebenden.<sup>36</sup>

While Benjamin refers in this passage specifically to novel-writing, his assertion that isolation and the inability to voice something orally are preconditions for the act of writing is one which I think can be applied to Stojka's writing. Stojka has not written a novel, but what Benjamin emphasises is the transition from the oral to the written — the isolation involved which is necessary for writing and which excludes the possibility of oral communication. Eder-Jordan points out that this sense of 'Einsamkeit' has been the motivation for many Romani writers to make the transition from oral storytelling to writing: 'Ein weiteres wichtiges Thema in der Literatur der Roma ist die Einsamkeit. Gleichzeitig ist das Gefühl der Einsamkeit und der Vereinsamung für viele Roma ein Auslöser um mit dem Schreiben zu beginnen'.<sup>37</sup> Stojka responds to Berger's question of whether or not there was a particular point where she decided to write by saying:

Daß ich mit jemandem reden wollte. Es war aber niemand da, der mir zugehört hätte, und - Papier ist geduldig. Es hat mit dem Schreiben halt recht gehapert, aber wie ich einmal begonnen hab, sind die Erinnerungen nur so herausgeschossen. Danach hat es mir das Gefühl gegeben, es ist vollbracht, das ist jetzt die Wahrheit (*Verborgenen*, 97).

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<sup>33</sup>See Martins-Heuß, pp. 207-209.

<sup>34</sup>Thurner, p. 129.

<sup>35</sup>See Milton, 'Persecuting the Survivors', pp. 40-43.

<sup>36</sup>Benjamin, p. 389. On Benjamin and oral tradition see Solms, 'Erzählen als Kunst', pp. 122-123.

<sup>37</sup>Eder-Jordan, 'Roma Literatur', p. 117.

Remarkable alongside Stojka's narratives as well as Franz's *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, is the 'Erzähler' function these two have had within their local communities and in the world, speaking to school-children and at Holocaust commemorative events. Assmann observes that 'was als Erinnerung aufblitzt, sind in der Regel ausgeschnittene, unverbundene Momente ohne Vorher und Nachher. Erst durch Erzählungen erhalten sie nachträglich eine Form und Struktur, die sie zugleich ergänzt und stabilisiert'.<sup>38</sup> Writing down her experiences in the form of a coherent narrative provides Stojka with the opportunity to find a voice with which to articulate her traumatic memories. In her case, the act of writing, which Benjamin associates with 'Einsamkeit' and the loss of community oral tradition, enables a kind of restoration of oral interaction between ethnic groups and generations. As stated before, the paper and the new medium of writing offer Stojka some security in the remembering of her past. In an environment where the transmission of memories requires careful expression and construction, the paper, as Stojka, points out 'is patient'. The feeling of completion and the construction of something that is 'die Wahrheit', is possible because of the patience and security of this means of transmission. However, this need for security in remembering points also to Stojka's caution in writing.

### 3.2.2 Finding Voice

In 1941, Stojka experienced the traumatic loss of her father, who was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to Dachau. Stojka describes this experience in her first narrative, *Wir Leben im Verborgenen: Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin*. The loss of her father pervades the text from the very first page, where she writes how the Gestapo came 'in einem kleinen Auto und stießen ihn hinein. Wir Kinder standen da, mit Tränen um unseren Vater' (*Verborgenen*, 16). She further emphasises their own helplessness in preventing the arrest of their father as she remembers 'er winkte noch einmal, dann fahren sie mit ihm fort. [...] Wir sahen ihn nie wieder' (*Verborgenen*, 16). This description is significant as the opening scene of her narrative because it serves to position herself, as the narrator, in the role of the child and brings the reader directly into her own traumatic memories. Stojka does not devote as much space to painting an idyllic picture of life before the horrors of the Third Reich as Franz does in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*. The lack of time that Stojka spends on depicting a childhood world that was lost in the horrors of the concentration camps forces the reader to confront the fact that her childhood was made up of the atrocities she faced in the places of torture and destruction, from the first violent intrusion of the Gestapo into her family's lives through her imprisonment in Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Bergen Belsen. The implementation of a restriction on travel, the fencing in of their home with barbed wire, and the expulsion of all 'Zigeuner' from Austrian schools all contributed to her lost childhood and violated innocence (*Verborgenen*, 16). Stojka writes, 'Ja, wir spürten

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<sup>38</sup> Assmann, *Vergangenheit*, p. 25.

Auschwitz schon in der Freiheit' (*Verborgenen*, 17). In 1943, a message arrived with news of her father's death in Dachau. Stojka's mother's request for his remains was answered by a package in the post with some ashes and a few small bones. A few days later, just as her family was preparing to bury the ashes that had been sent to them, Stojka, her mother and five siblings were arrested and deported to Auschwitz. The loss of Stojka's childhood becomes clear to the reader through the child's narration of these traumatic memories.

Stojka's use of the narrative voice of herself as a child is an important literary quality of her work. Stojka describes objects in terms of the colors and shapes that are especially noteworthy to a child. She describes the bowls they ate out of in Auschwitz: 'Unsere Eßschüsseln hatten innen und außen eine Farbe, sie waren alle rot. Sie hatten die Form eines halben Balles und standen nie ganz gerade' (*Verborgenen*, p. 27). The child's perspective encourages the reader to think about or see images that might not have been conveyed through an adult narrative voice. Another example of this is Stojka's impression of the boots that the SS men and women wear. She writes, 'Die SS-Männer waren sehr groß und schlank, ich sah immer nur auf ihre hochpolierten Stiefel' (*Verborgenen*, p. 23). Repeatedly throughout *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, references recur to the shiny black boots that represent the violence Stojka has witnessed. She remembers standing at roll call for twenty-four hours while the SS searched for a missing man: 'Viele Kinder, Frauen und Männer sind damals gestorben. Die SS-Männer gingen von Reihe zu Reihe und sagten zu manchem Mann: "Heraustreten!" und schlugen ihn zu Boden. Dann traten sie ihn mit ihren Stiefeln, die so glänzten, zu Tode' (*Verborgenen*, p. 31). The image of the shining black boots is also prevalent in her paintings and poetry.<sup>39</sup> The reader strongly feels the impact the sight of these boots had on the child. An important feature of using the child's narrative voice is in conveying the unspeakable and unimaginable nature of the environment where she was imprisoned. Stojka remembers herself in Bergen Belsen:

Doch dann schien wieder die Sonne. Wir saßen draußen am Fußboden, Mama und ich, sie erzählte mir Verschiedenes. Ich fragte: 'Mama, sag glaubst du, daß es Wien noch gibt, oder ist hier die ganze Welt? Ich glaube nicht, daß es noch etwas anderes geben kann' (*Verborgenen*, p. 62).

Through suggesting the unimaginable quality of a world that is not filled with horror, this child's question forces the reader to confront the unimaginably terrible reality of the concentration camps.

Another quality of the child's narrative voice is the scarcity of metaphor in her descriptions. Stojka's writes her memories with short, simple sentences and conveys the brutality she witnessed through straightforward images.<sup>40</sup> In this Stojka does not evade the vivid quality of her memory of first entering Bergen Belsen in her written description of it:

<sup>39</sup>See poems and paintings in *Meine Wahl zu Schreiben. Ich kann es nicht*.

<sup>40</sup>Due to lack of space, I will not analyze Ceija Stojka's *Träume ich, daß ich lebe?* (Vienna, Picus, 2005), in this chapter. I would like to point out, however, that the lack of metaphor and the vivid directness of her description of atrocity I mention here carries over into this more detailed account of her time in Bergen-Belsen.

Wir kamen in das Lager Bergen Belsen, es lag mitten in einem großen Wald. Wir marschierten durch ein Gittertor. Der erste Anblick war erschütternd. Gleich hinter dem Tor lagen ein paar Tote, der Brustkorb war ihnen aufgeschlitzt, Herz und Leber fehlten ihnen. [...] Nur ein paar Schritte vor der Baracke lagen die Toten, daß man sie gar nicht zählen konnte, einer über dem anderen, jung und alt, manche lebten auch noch (*Verborgenen*, p. 56).

That a child would be able to notice the heart and liver missing from an open chest is unlikely, but Stojka's memory of being confronted with such an image reminds the reader of how young she is at the time. Stojka does not avoid including her memories of the piles of corpses, the smell of burning bodies, and the screams of people dying: 'Die SS-Männer stießen sie dann in einen Ölschacht, es roch nicht mehr süß, denn sie hatten ja alles an, Kleider, Schuhe und ihre Haare. Doch wir hörten und wußten alles' (*Verborgenen*, p. 28). All of these are told in the child's voice and rarely with the use of metaphor. These straightforward statements evoke the images for the reader and do not distract from the child's voice with sophisticated metaphor; in this way, Stojka emphasises the reality of the child witness.

Although she uses the voice of a child in the written representation of her memories, she does not catch herself in a repetition of trauma. LaCapra describes trauma and post-traumatic acting out by saying 'one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop'.<sup>41</sup> Stojka, however, resists this impulse in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*. The vivid descriptions of her memories in the text indicate to the reader that Stojka is reliving the experiences while writing. The child's perspective might suggest a feeling of being trapped within those memories, but by including commentary in her adult voice throughout the narrative, Stojka reminds the reader that she is remembering. When describing her reaction to Ossi's death in Auschwitz she writes, 'ich sah, wo ihn der Krankenpfleger hinbrachte, es war eine kleinere Baracke, er legte ihn auf die anderen Toten. Ich deckte ihn mit meinem Unterhemd zu, das ich mir ausgezogen hatte. (Wie könnte ich dies vergessen?)' (*Verborgenen*, p. 27). The parenthetical questioning of her own memory and the unforgettable quality of the horror of losing her brother indicates Stojka stepping out of the narrative voice of the child and reminds the reader of the grown woman's presence; she asks herself and her reader how this kind of memory could ever be forgotten. Later in the narrative, recalling her arrival in Ravensbrück, Stojka writes

anschließend bekamen wir alle eine Registriernummer: ein weißer, länglicher Stoffstreifen mit einem schwarzen Winkel, das hieß arbeitsscheu. (Aber wie konnte ich arbeitsscheu sein, ich war ja noch ein Kind!) Den Streifen mußten wir uns auf die linke Seite nähen. Nun waren wir alle gekennzeichnet: der letzte Abschaum der Menschheit (*Verborgenen*, p. 41).

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<sup>41</sup>LaCapra, p. 21.



Here again Stojka uses parentheses to remind the reader of the author's presence. In this passage, she does not confine the author's voice to the parentheses, but remains the adult commenting on this for the two sentences following it to demonstrate the presence of both the child narrator and the adult author, the former recalling the act of sewing the symbol onto her clothes and the latter recognising the full weight of its significance.

Stojka also refers to the role of music in Romani life in her memories. In remembering the work allocated to Romani prisoners in the camps, carrying stones or cleaning the latrines, she includes the text of a song that she says originated in Auschwitz:

Angekommen sind wir im Auschwitz-Paradies, / Kinder laßt Euch sagen, / Die Gegend ist hier mies. / Nirgends ist ein Haus zu sehen / Wir müssen durch den Schornstein geh'n, / Oh weh, Lili Marleen, oh weh, Lili Marleen (*Verborgenen*, p. 23).

The inclusion of this song in Stojka's text emphasises the importance of music in Romani culture and in Romani representations of the Holocaust; texts by Alfred Lessing and Karl Stojka also use references to music to connect with their memories of the past. Ceija Stojka emphasises the importance of music in Romani culture later in the second section of *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and also in the second section of *Reisende auf dieser Welt* entitled 'Solange es Roma gibt, werden sie singen'. Later she refers to music again when she remembers her mother obtaining bread and sharing it with a group of women and children.

Meine Schwester Kathi wurde plötzlich ganz melancholisch, es wurde ihr ganz weh ums Herz. Sie schaute die Frauen an, die weinten und lachten zugleich, und da fing sie an zu singen. [...] Sie sang: 'Ich weiss, es wird einmal ein Wunder geschehen', und alle in unserer Baracke summten ganz leise mit (*Verborgenen*, p. 35).

While this memory may come across to the reader as idealised, the reference to singing is an important element of Stojka's text. Eder has identified references to music as a common theme in Romani literature,<sup>42</sup> and I think Stojka uses these references to music in her text in order to communicate its importance in Romani culture.

'Auschwitz habe ich ein zweites Mal erlebt. Manchesmal hab ich sogar aufgeschaut und mir gedacht, Hilfe der kommt auf mich zu mit seinen Stiefeln' (*Verborgenen*, p. 98). This statement, included in the interview section at the end, is the writer's reflection on herself as a writer and so acknowledges her position as a person recalling and recording, moving away from the idea of completely reliving the experience through her memory. She, like Franz, continues to have nightmares about her experiences in the camps, but has resolved to publish and to make known the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust. Stojka's carrying out of this resolution indicates that she is engaging in the 'articulatory practice' LaCapra characterises as the working through of trauma.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, pp. 145-153.

<sup>43</sup>LaCapra, p. 23.

### 3.2.3 Writing Gender

Zoe Waxman emphasises the importance of working towards a ‘comprehension of the Holocaust broadened to acknowledge types of experience that stand outside traditional narratives’.<sup>44</sup> In *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, Stojka establishes a unique network of family within the camps which she portrays as the basis for her own survival. Most of Stojka’s memories center around her mother, her sisters and the various women with whom they share their experiences of the camps. In their portrayal, Stojka focuses on their shared struggle for survival and the methods they used to stay alive. Stojka remembers when her mother traded a cigarette stub for bread: ‘Wir krochen alle in unsere Buchsen, Mama, Kathi, ich und unsere Bekannten, Chiwe mit ihrem Sohn Burli und ihrer Tochter Ruberta, Leni mit ihrem Sohn Toni und Mimi mit Teo. Unsere Mama brach für jede Familie ein Stück Brot ab. Die Mütter hielten sehr stark zusammen’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 35). Stojka creates a network of people that belong to her ‘family’ in the camp. These were all mothers with children or abandoned children who looked out for each other. She remembers meeting Resi in the sewing station at Ravensbrück: ‘Sie hatte keine Verwandten und keine Mutter, sie war ganz allein. [...] Mama nahm sie bei uns auf’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 42). This network and the bond between the women and their children is portrayed as very strong, particularly when the females are separated from Stojka’s two brothers and are moved to the ‘women’s camp’ of Ravensbrück. Throughout the narrative, Stojka emphasises the role her mother played in her own survival: ‘Wir Kinder krochen immer in unsere Mutter. Ohne sie hätte ich kaum überlebt’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 30). Stojka dedicated *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* to the memory of her mother. The efforts of her mother to keep her children alive included foraging and bargaining for any scrap of food, making underclothes from the blankets of those who had died and lying about their ages to avoid selection. ‘Meine Mama war sehr erfinderisch’, Stojka writes. ‘Sie holte aus unserer Baracke einen langen, rostigen Nagel. Dann riß sie von ihrem Kleid ein ganz dünnes Band und nähte mit dem unsere Kleider’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 60).

Eder has emphasised the importance of family in Romani life, noting that the traditional roles of Romani women still require them to be the bearers and carers of children.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that their travelling lifestyle often meant that they were camping with other families; women would usually cook together at one campfire, the children would play together and the women would sew and care for the children together. It is interesting to compare Stojka’s portrayal of the bond between the women in the camp and her portrayal of life on the road in *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, where she remembers travelling with her mother, aunt and sisters, collecting herbs and cooking and sewing by the fire. She remembers: ‘Am frühen Morgen gingen wir Frauen in die Ortschaft um frische Milch zu holen’ (*Reisende*, p. 26). The role of gathering food, preparing it and sewing belonged to women. Waxman warns that,

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<sup>44</sup>Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, p. 140.

<sup>45</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 211.

‘accounts of mutual care and concern become problematic when used to obscure the horrors of the concentration camps by introducing a redemptive message into the Holocaust’.<sup>46</sup> Stojka does present moments of mutual care and concern between women in her narrative of Holocaust memories, but I think it is important to note the possible connection between the traditional Romani family roles in this context. Additionally, Stojka does subvert the idea of a ‘redemptive message’ in these memories by revealing that this togetherness did not save all of them. Resi, for example, was massacred through a horrific sterilisation procedure, which her surrogate role in the Stojka family could not prevent.

The trauma of her experiences in the camps carries through into her later relationships and she points out the effect that the murder of her father had on her later life:

Mein Leben wäre sicher anders verlaufen, wenn es den unsinnigen Krieg nicht gegeben hätte. So viele von unserem kleinen Volk hatte man aus den verschiedenen Ländern in die Konzentrationslager gebracht und so viele von uns hatte man vernichtet. Es gab nur mehr sehr wenige junge Burschen und Mädchen, für beide Geschlechter bestand nach dem Krieg eine große Lücke, die sich nicht so schnell auffüllen ließ. Viele Männer waren nicht mehr zurückgekommen, und die meisten Mädchen hatten keinen Vater. Man war der Sehnsucht nach der verlorenen Fürsorge und Geborgenheit und nach der Liebe eines Vaters sehr ausgesetzt. So suchte ein junges Mädchen wie ich die Liebe eines Mannes als Ersatz für das, was sie verloren hatte, was man ihr mit Gewalt genommen und vernichtet hatte. Und so lernte auch ich das mir noch unbekannte Leben kennen, das nicht ohne Folgen blieb (*Reisende*, p. 36).

Stojka’s expression of longing for her father whom she lost so long ago again reminds the reader of the loss of childhood that she experienced in the camps. This time, the narrative voice of the adult tells of the consequences of this loss. Stojka presumably refers here to having to raise three children, mostly on her own, and the relationships with men that did not last.

In the same way that she highlights the role of her mother in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, the central figure of *Reisende auf dieser Welt* is her portrayal of herself as a mother, fighting for the survival of her own children, first in their life on the road and later living in Vienna. This narrative focuses on Stojka’s struggle as a single mother to earn a living and to take care of her children. She writes of the small flats where she lived in Vienna and of travelling from market to market in order to make a living. The traumatic event that is at the heart of this narrative is the loss of her youngest son, Jano. She remembers locking him in a room to help him withdraw from heroin use:

Ich massierte ihn, bis seine Wangen ein wenig Farbe bekamen. Kleine Bissen Butterbrot mit Milch kaute ich und steckte sie ihm in den Mund. Dieser Nacht war sehr schlimm. Ich wollte schon weinen, doch eine innere Stimme sagte mir, ‘Unterlaß’ das’ (*Reisende*, p. 63).

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<sup>46</sup>Waxmann, *Writing the Holocaust*, p. 146.

The strength she describes in herself in being able to tell herself not to cry is reminiscent of the strong mother figure her own mother represented in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*. In spite of this strength, however, she cannot save Jano from his addiction.

In contrast with her portrayal of mothers and children, Stojka reports of the female perpetrators in her text, remembering her first glimpse of the female guards:

an den Bahnstation standen uniformierte Frauen, ihre Uniform war braungrün, auf den Schultern hatten sie Sterne und verschiedene rote und gelbe Streifen, in ihren Händen hielten sie Gummiknuten. Ihre Stiefel glänzten in dem gelben Licht und knirschten. Sie waren bei Gott keine sanften Frauen (*Verborgenen*, p. 38).

As previously discussed, Romani women were traditionally carers in their family environments and so this first impression for Stojka of women who do not fit with her image and previous experience of what women should be scares her. Later she remarks, 'ja, es war nicht einfach in diesem Frauenlager Ravensbrück. Die SS-Frauen waren schlechter als jeder Satan' (*Verborgenen*, p. 51). In the same way as Franz describes the female guards as hyenas, Stojka remarks on the inhumanity of these women by comparing them to Satan. 'Aufseherin Binz', one of the guards in Ravensbrück, comes across to the reader as a particularly fascinating figure for Stojka, who describes the 'icy' beauty of the guard's blonde hair and blue eyes and then goes on to say 'wir konnten uns nicht vorstellen, daß eine so schöne Frau kein Herz haben konnte' (*Verborgenen*, p. 40). Hardman points to the importance of not simply equating the female experience of the Holocaust with relationality and nurturing, but acknowledging the existence of the 'woman who kills'.<sup>47</sup> While Stojka has written about the relationality between women in the camps and has constructed it as more of a 'feminine quality' in her texts, her confrontation with the cruelty inflicted by the female guards in the camps challenges this idea of femininity in her writing.

The sterilisations that Romani women experienced in the camps are also remembered in *Wir leben im Verborgenen*. As Sybil Milton records, the public health service began a genealogical and anthropological registration of all Romanies in the early 1930s.

Moreover, in the summer of 1938, the Burgenland *Gauleiter* Tobias Portschy argued for the forced labor and sterilisation of Gypsies as 'hereditarily tainted... a people of habitual criminals, parasites causing enormous damages to the national body, *Volkskörper*'. Although no national Gypsy law was ever enacted, the exclusion and sterilisation of Sinti and Roma became a nationally coordinated policy aim.<sup>48</sup>

Anna Hardman writes of the targeting and victimisation of women through sterilisation, highlighting that 'the "Nazi view" of women determined that not only were Jewish women less useful in terms of labour, but being defined in biological terms, were potential mothers of Jewish

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<sup>47</sup>Hardman, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup>Milton, 'Hidden Lives', p. 66.

children and targeted as such'.<sup>49</sup> In much the same way, Romani women were rigorously defined in biological terms of whether or not they were pure 'Zigeuner' or 'Zigeunermischlinge' and were targeted as women who should not be allowed to reproduce.<sup>50</sup> Stojka remembers the devastation of the sterilisations in Ravensbrück while she, her mother, and her sister were able to avoid being sterilised because they were on washing duty at the time. When they were finally taken there was power failure. Resi, however was taken away to be sterilised. 'Viele Frauen waren darauf, wie Schweine lagen sie übereinander', Stojka remembers. 'Ganz oben lag unsere kleine Resi. Sie waren sterilisiert worden, alle hatten große Schmerzen, sie konnten nicht einmal ein einziges Wort sagen. Die kleine Resi starb gleich, auch die anderen kamen nicht mehr durch. Alle waren tot' (*Verborgenen*, p. 52).

Stojka also emphasises her role as a Romani woman who writes and the part it played in the writing of her texts. Although she reveals little of the organisational hierarchy of the family, which exists according to Romani tradition,<sup>51</sup> Stojka does indicate that her brothers were in a position of authority and she emphasises that she received little support from the men in her family for her writing. In fact, she remembers that when she gave an initial manuscript to her brother to read, he told her to throw it away. After that incident, she hid the manuscript in the kitchen because that was the only place nobody would find it:

Ich hab mich geniert für mein Gekritzel und bin dann gegangen. Trotzdem hab ich alles genommen und in der Küche, wo niemand hinkommt aufgehoben. Und immer, wenn ich eine neue Seite fertig hatte, hab ich sie dazugeschmissen. Zum Schluß hab ich mich nicht mehr aufhalten lassen. Auch wenn es geheißen hat, ich soll in die Küche gehen, hab ich nicht mehr gefolgt. Es ist dann zu viel auf mich zugekommen, ich habe zu viel erlebt und mich durchkämpfen müssen. Damit mir Auschwitz nichts machen kann (*Verborgenen*, p. 98).

Her partner at the time also told her that she should spend her time cooking instead of writing.<sup>52</sup> She describes her role in the household in the second section of *Wir leben im Verborgenen*. 'Eine halbe Stunde hab ich meistens geschrieben, dann mußte ich schon wieder kochen. Während ich aber gekocht oder das Essen serviert oder Geschirr abgewaschen hab, hat sich das in mir wieder gespeichert, in meinen Gedanken war ich schon wieder auf dem Papier' (*Verborgenen*, p. 97). It is possible to question her role in writing down an Austrian Romani experience of the Holocaust in connection with Eder-Jordan's emphasis on the Romani woman's role as a mediator between the *Gadje* and Romanies.<sup>53</sup> As Franz was the first Romani in Germany to write down her memories of the Holocaust, Stojka was the first in Austria. Stojka remem-

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<sup>49</sup>Hardman, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup>For a discussion of the racial categorisation of 'Zigeuner' and 'Zigeunermischlinge', see Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>51</sup>Reemtsma, p. 63. According to Reemtsma, these structures were severely weakened by the loss of so many family members in the Holocaust. See also Kirsten Martins-Heuß 'Reflections on Collective Identity', pp. 207-209.

<sup>52</sup>Stojka, Interview, 2007.

<sup>53</sup>Eder-Jordan, 'Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma', p. 13.

bers her brothers' anger at the publication of her memories; they felt that in revealing their family background she was putting their businesses at risk.<sup>54</sup> Only after the positive reception of Ceija Stojka's work became evident did they also write and publish their memories. Stojka does make a conscious effort to emphasise the experiences that were unique to her as a woman, from the sterilisations of women and girls in the camps to the uncharacteristic image of a Romani woman sitting down and writing without the approval of her family.

### 3.3 Belonging and Romani Identity: Establishing Heimat

Similarly to Franz, who said she never would want to leave her Heimat of Germany, Stojka expresses the idea of Austria being her home and emphasises that there is no place she would rather live, despite the discrimination she has faced there. She responds to her own question of how she could move back to a country that had allowed her family's deportation by saying:

wir wollten ja nicht in andere Ländern leben, wir wollten schon [...] dort leben wo wir geboren sind, wo unsere Großeltern beerdigt sind. Das heißt, dass wir nicht den Gedanken gehabt haben, dass wir jetzt auswandern nach Amerika oder in irgendeinem anderen Land. Mein Großvater liegt hier beerdigt. Das wäre ein Verrat gewesen und die Zigeuner sind sehr anhänglich auf ihre Menschen und sie lieben sie. Und wir wollten eigentlich in unsere Gassen weiterleben.<sup>55</sup>

Here, Stojka emphasises how her personal history is inscribed in the landscape of Austria by pointing out the significance of her ancestors remains being part of the physical land and of her memories of home and family being bound with certain Viennese streets, which she refers to possessively as 'unsere Gassen'. However, she binds this idea of home specifically to what she thinks of as a characteristic of Romani life and her own experience of Austria: the strong connection between family members and living where they also lived. Her attachment to her natural surroundings, the soil where her grandfather is buried, asserts a claim of ownership of this land. Again, as Franz has done in Germany, Stojka holds up this claim to a feeling of home and belonging in opposition to the *Gadje* Romani ideal of a people who are not tied to a particular place and who are strangers to the concept of home as a fixed place. Stojka responds to this notion of the carefree travelling life: 'Ich weiß nicht, wer das komponiert hat, "Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben". [...] Was ist da lustig? Für den, der kein Rom ist, ist es lustig. Aber für mich, die ich dieses Leben habe führen müssen, für mich ist es nicht lustig' (*Reisende*, p. 131). In fact, Stojka reflects on her desire to have had a room or place of her own and to be able to have the choice to travel from there if she wanted. Indeed, she presents a much darker and more critical view of Heimat than Franz does in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*. In *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, she takes the reader from the 'Gassen' of Vienna to Auschwitz with

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<sup>54</sup>Stojka, Interview, 2007.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

the chilling statement ‘das ist unsere neue Heimat’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 21). As well as revealing something about her experiences in the camps, this statement presents a critical intervention in the conservative Heimat tradition. In her texts, Stojka works out the myths and realities involving the mobility of Romani life, the life travelling from market to market in Austria trying to make enough money to support her family, against the need for space and belonging. Her texts provide a place for her to situate Romanies in Austria through her use of language, descriptions of landscape and nature and interactions with Austria and Austrians.

### 3.3.1 Language

Stojka’s use of language, writing in German and Romani while including language that is characteristically Austrian, contributes to the dialogue between Austrian and Romani identities in her text. She uses Romani in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* particularly to give voices to her family, especially her mother and sister. She uses the Romani language in recalling moments of extreme stress, emphasising the comfort that the words of her mother tongue provide. For example, in the passage where she describes her family’s desperate attempt to get on the *Lastwagen* that would take them away from Ravensbrück, she remembers,

Meine Schwester Kathi war die Erste. Sie packte ihre Decke und rannte, so schnell sie konnte. Zu uns sagte sie noch: ‘*Jek sidde mendoj, be nasch widu Mama!* (Einer muß durchkommen, lauf auch du Mama!) und schon war sie auf dem Lastwagen, ohne sich abzumelden. Es ging sehr rasch. Der eine Lastwagen war schon ganz voll und da war er auch schon weg. Nun rannten ich und unsere Mama um unser Leben, Chiwe, Burli und Rupa schlossen sich an. Mimi und ihr Sohn Teo, alle liefen mit uns. Wir waren so schnell auf dem Lastwagen, daß wir gar nicht denken konnten. Mama sagte zu mir: ‘*Banschuw dida delle!*’ (Bück dich ganz nach unten!) Nun war auch dieser Lastwagen voll (*Verborgenen*, 55).

The extreme circumstances of panic and fear are evident in this passage; Stojka’s use of Romani adds emotion to the scene, giving her mother and sister unique voices and emphasising the distress that they are experiencing. In the passage where she describes arriving in Auschwitz, she contrasts the Romani words with the language of the perpetrators: ‘Unsere Mama sagte zu uns: “Chutilien dume mindig gaj murie zocha”. (Haltet euch immer an mir fest.) Die SS-Männer schrien: “Im Laufschrift Marsch”, sie schlugen uns auf den Rücken und preßten uns in eine Baracke’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 21). The comfort of her mother’s words in Romani stand in remarkable contrast in this passage to the words and actions of the SS officers. The inclusion of her mother’s words in Romani in the above quotation offers the comfort that the place of Auschwitz does not; her mother’s words and the presence of her family in this terrifying place provide a crucial element of *Geborgenheit*, a remnant of ‘zu Hause’, in this passage which describes the horror of what she calls her new ‘Heimat’ (*Verborgenen*, 21).

Stojka’s choice to write her narratives in German is significant in the same way as Franz’s decision to use German in *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, in that both writers indicate their intended

readership through this choice. However, Franz does not use Romani in her writing at all, where Stojka's use of some dialogue in Romani in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* must be addressed in terms of Reiter's observation that 'bereits mit der Wahl einer bestimmten Sprache für ihren Bericht treffen die Überlebenden eine für die Bewertung ihre Erlebnisse selbst bedeutungsvolle Entscheidung'.<sup>56</sup> Stojka's use of both languages in her text indicates a determination to show the combination of German and Romani in terms of identity and belonging; as I will later demonstrate, Stojka uses linguistic features typical of the Austrian dialect in her text, further asserting her identity as an Austrian Romani. The offer of a German translation for the Romani words in Stojka's text is groundbreaking, as speakers of Romani have been reluctant to share their language with outsiders, seeing it as a potential way of robbing them of their culture.<sup>57</sup> Stojka's use of German is significant because it signals who her intended readership is, but her inclusion of Romanes also works to assert a more positive group identity for Romanies. In her use of this language and by providing a translation, she deconstructs the stereotypical image of the secretive and sly *Zigeuner* who speaks a language nobody can understand.<sup>58</sup> She also shows the reader that she has mastered both languages, challenging the idea that Romanies are foreigners who cannot speak German. She writes in German to target a German-speaking readership, but in doing so does not deny her Romani heritage.

I would argue that the inclusion of these Romani phrases is a significant assertion of Stojka's cultural identity as an Austrian Romani who speaks the two languages. It is interesting to note that she also consistently uses linguistic features characteristic of Austrian dialect. She refers to her siblings' names with the diminutive suffix -i, which is common in Austrian speech: Ossi, Karli, Hansi, Kathi and Mitzi. Also, references to Austrian food such as *Kaiserschmarren*, *Gugelhupf* and *Melange* further enforce the idea of Austria as Stojka's homeland.<sup>59</sup> This inclusion of language which anchors her within two different cultures forces them to merge in the pages of her narrative and reveals her knowledge of the intimacies of the Austrian dialect and expressions. As Jean Améry has observed: 'Muttersprache und Heimatwelt wachsen mit uns, wachsen in uns hinein und werden so zur Vertrautheit, die uns Sicherheit verbürgt'.<sup>60</sup> Ceija Stojka's familiarity and ease with language in this text reveal the security that the Romani language represents for her. Her use of her mother's words in moments of distress reminds the reader of her unique identification with Austria and with the German language: an identification unusually marked by Romani tradition and language. Her use of her family's Romani

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<sup>56</sup>Reiter, p. 114.

<sup>57</sup>Reemtsma, p. 74. See also Tebbutt's discussion of the significance of Stojka's use of Romani in this narrative in 'Marginalization and Memories', p. 144. See also Gerhard Baumgartner, 'Eine andere österreichische Literatur: Zur Literatur der Sinti und Roma in Österreich', *Literatur und Kritik* 327/328 (1998), 41-53.

<sup>58</sup>Tebbutt, 'Marginalization and Memories', p. 145.

<sup>59</sup>Compare with Tebbutt, 'Marginalization and Memories', p. 148

<sup>60</sup>Améry, p. 84.



names throughout her texts which are then in turn given an Austrian quality through an -i suffix, offer the reader a glimpse of the duality of the identity which Ceija Stojka represents here. Her establishment of Austria as her homeland, combined with her bold inclusion of her family and her language in that homeland, are part of her attempt to situate herself and her relationship to language within Austria.

### 3.3.2 Landscape and Place

After the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, Stojka and her family went back to their home of Vienna. However, as Berger makes clear, 'das Zurückkommen nach Wien bedeutet[e] für Ceija Stojka nicht die Rückkehr in eine Heimat, die Interesse und Mitgefühl für das Schicksal Überlebender der Konzentrationslager gezeigt hätte. Roma und Sinti litten unter einem besonderen Maß an Ausgrenzung in der Nachkriegsgesellschaft; die vielen, weiterhin bestehenden Vorurteile erschwerten ihre Lebenssituation'.<sup>61</sup> Austria did not question its own identity as perpetrators in the Third Reich<sup>62</sup> and Romanies, left with little choice but to go back on the road and make a living from travelling to markets, did not have the means to confront the continuation of prejudice in their homeland. Stojka's first narrative came at a time when Austria first started to question its role in the Third Reich. Stojka, who describes herself as a keen observer of the news and given the opportunity by Karin Berger,<sup>63</sup> influenced this discussion by asserting Romani history and experience into the history of Austria. Stojka is very much aware of the failure of Austria to address its role in the Holocaust and of the lack of opportunities available for Romanies when they returned to Austria and yet she tries to establish her sense of belonging in that country, building up another kind of landscape tradition which includes the Romani cultural connection to the physical land.

Simon Schama, in the introduction to his book, *Landscape and Memory*, highlights the importance of memory in imagining the landscape of a country. He writes, 'for although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are in fact, indivisible. Before it can ever be a repose of the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock'.<sup>64</sup> This image of scenery being built from the strata of memory fits with Stojka's assertion that she would never want to leave her homeland because her ancestors are buried there and are part of the land. Stojka establishes her view as a Romani view of Austria, positing the notion of a Romani landscape of Austria. She builds an image of Austria and Vienna as home, establishing a sense of belonging and identity through her connection with nature and land. When asked to describe her relationship to Austria, Stojka had no hesitation in responding,

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<sup>61</sup>Berger in *Reisende*, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup>Menasse, pp.14-23.

<sup>63</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>64</sup>Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 6.

Ich liebe dieses Land. Ich liebe die Erde, den Himmel und die Wolken die darüber ziehen. Weil sie streifen die Erde wo meine Ahnen liegen, die Wolken. Nicht weit weg von hier liegen unsere Toten vor dem Krieg und auch die nach dem Krieg. Wir wären nie von Österreich weggegangen [...]. Wir sind sehr bodenständig. Wir lieben dieses Land. Die Wurzeln, die Bäume. Auch die Menschen.<sup>65</sup>

Stojka's emphasis on the earth, sky, clouds, roots and trees that constitute her relationship with Austria highlights the physical landscape which, in her opinion, is strongly bound to Romani culture in Austria.<sup>66</sup> Assmann's connection between land and memory, that the land is 'überzogen mit Geschichten, und der Protagonist lernt, seine eigene Geschichte als Teil dieser uralten Geschichten zu erzählen' can be applied again here.<sup>67</sup> Stojka's personal history and the stories she tells through her narrative are very much tied to the geographical location of Austria. For her, Romani life has long played itself out on the landscape of Austria; the location of Austria and her genealogy are inseparable for her, creating her idea, or landscape, of home. She opens *Wir leben im Verborgenen* by introducing the members of her family, setting the scene and establishing a sense of place, home, and belonging. The first line of the narrative reads, '1939 fuhren wir Rom noch mit Wagen und Pferden frei in Österreich herum. Meine Mutter war damals zweiunddreißig Jahre alt, mein Vater ebenfalls' (*Verborgenen*, 15). The reader is drawn into the story by the narrative voice of a child establishing herself as a member of a family, asserting her place in this family and in its location, Austria. However, for Stojka, nature and landscape are not part of Romani life and culture for aesthetic reasons, but as a means of survival.

The Romani connection with nature is often seen in a romantic and positive light by non-Romanies. Stojka, both in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* and in *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, references nature in a more functional way than Franz did in her work. Reiter identifies descriptions of nature in Holocaust narratives as a way of expressing a longing for freedom against the imprisonment of the camps.<sup>68</sup> The few metaphors that Stojka uses in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* relate her experiences to the natural world and the glimpses of the natural world we see in her first narrative represent these as places of peace and familiarity, but as I have demonstrated in reference to the work of Philomena Franz, the Romani identification with the land, nature and soil goes beyond a way of representing a longing for freedom. Franz's admiration and descriptions of nature could be described as romantic and idealised, but functions as a way of setting a place for Romani life within Germany. Stojka continues this representation of a connection between Romani identity and the natural world, but emphasises nature as an essential tool for survival and acknowledges the hardships involved in such a close relationship with the natural

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<sup>65</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>66</sup>Compare with Stojka's brother, Karl, who left Austria many times to live in Germany, France, Italy, Portugal and the United States. See Chapter 4 of this thesis for further discussion of his narrative, *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*.

<sup>67</sup>Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

<sup>68</sup>Reiter, p. 142.

world. For her the image of Heimat that she carries with her in the camps is not an image of nature, as it was with Franz, but rather the thought of the *Kongreßbad* next to their home in Vienna where she and her siblings spent much time. When Stojka writes of her little brother, Ossi, who is suffering with typhus in the *Krankenblock* at Auschwitz, she tries to comfort him by evoking images of 'Zuhause': 'Ich sage zu meinem kleinen Liebling: "Ossi, wir können bald nach Hause gehen, und dann gehen wir ins Kongreßbad. Freust du dich?"' (*Verborgenen*, 26). This evocation of the comforting image of home highlights Stojka's strong connection with an Austrian Romani landscape that centers on security, place, and belonging rather than on Austria as a political nation. Even as her brother is dying in squalid conditions, Stojka remembers herself offering the only place of security that she knew as a comfort to him. Her focus on Heimat in this text emphasises place, claiming space not only in the natural world of woods and meadows that Franz described, but also in the city of Vienna.

Stojka remembers fondly the 16th district of Vienna, where she and her family settled after the restrictions on travelling had been set and her father turned the wagon into a house.<sup>69</sup> Her description of the nearby *Kongreßbad* expresses the joy of a child recalling the special qualities of home. Stojka recalls:

Gleich neben unserem Hof war das schöne Kongreßbad, wo wir Kinder uns sehr viel aufhielten, und in der Paletzgasse gab es einen neuen Gemeindebau, der wegen seiner roten Farbe von den Bewohnern Paprikakistl genannt wurde. In diesem Neubau wohnte die Patin meiner Schwester Kathi. Wir nannten sie Gusti-Godl. Sie war einfach ein Sonnenschein. Sie versteckte uns vor den Nazis, wann immer sie die Möglichkeit dazu hatte (*Verborgenen*, 16).

This setting of the scene, the description of the neighbouring houses and people living there, and her assurance of being included by those people (familiarity with their nick-name for the house, 'Paprikakistl') conveys the sense of belonging associated with the idea of home. In this passage it is possible to feel the sense of *Geborgenheit* which is an essential part of the concept of Heimat.<sup>70</sup> Stojka's familiarity with this place and the conviction that its people will keep her safe reinforces Améry's description of the quality of Heimat being in the 'Dialektik von Kennen - Erkennen, Trauen - Vertrauen'.<sup>71</sup>

For Stojka, the Romani cultural connection with landscape was professional and practical. In writing about traveling after the end of the war, she remembers when the tractor began to overtake the role of the horse and Stojka writes 'was nutzte die schöne Landschaft, wenn man keine Pferde verkaufen oder tauschen konnte? Es herbstelte schon und unsere Reise wurde immer schwerer. Die Männer waren verzweifelt. Ein Pferd mußte notgeschlachtet werden'

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<sup>69</sup>The memory of this place is treated with affection also in Karl Stojka's *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, p. 34, and Mongo Stojka's *Papierene Kinder*, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup>cf. Klaus Weigelt, *Heimat und Nation: Zur Geschichte und Identität der Deutschen* (Mainz: Hase and Kohler, 1984), pp. 15-16.

<sup>71</sup>Améry, p. 82.

(*Reisende*, p. 57). In this passage Stojka reveals the practical connection to Romani life and the essential livelihood that the Austrian landscape provided for Romanies. Forced to change with the times, Romanies later started to sell other goods at markets and began to use cars for transport rather than horses and wagons; in addition, they began to stay in flats rather than live from the land. In her memories from before this transition, however, the role of nature as being the practical space of survival for Romanies is an important one in Stojka's texts. She remembers this practical role and the place of Romanies within the functionality of this landscape:

Trotz der ersten kalten Tage war der Herbst eine Jahreszeit, die der Rom besonders schätzte. Er war reich, und saftig waren seine Früchte, die dem Rom in der freien Natur zugute kamen. [...] Der dichte Nebel hob sich mit dem Sonnenschein, und auf dem blattlosen Apfelbaum konnte ich die roten oder gelben Äpfel pflücken. Auch die Nüsse hatten nichts dagegen, wenn ich sie einsammelte. Und wenn eine Wiese mit Obstbäumen so schön war, dann war es für jeden Rom der richtige Platz, um ein wenig auszuspannen (*Reisende*, p. 58).

In this passage, Stojka places Romanies within this autumnal landscape, surviving from what it offers them and emphasising their role within it.

The connection with nature as a tool for survival is also evident in her memories of the concentration camps. Central to her memories of Bergen Belsen is the image of a certain tree which played an important role in her life there.

Vor unserer Baracke stand ein einziger Laubbaum. Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, wie der dorthin gekommen war. Er hatt schöne, dicke, hellgrüne Blätter. Er war nicht sehr hoch, man konnte die Blätter angreifen. Sie hatten einen süßlichen Geschmack und waren saftig dick. Jeden Tag holten wir ein paar und verspeisten sie. Sie waren einfach köstlich (*Verborgenen*, p. 60).

Stojka calls this tree 'Lebensspender' and tells how its leaves and its sap helped her and her family survive. I would argue that Stojka's reliance on the 'kindness' of nature in the camps shows, as discussed in relation to language, an element of security in a place that otherwise offered none. When Stojka describes the journey out of Auschwitz after she is selected, along with her mother and sister, to be deported to Ravensbrück, her representation of the landscape she sees evokes the comfort it provided for her — the longing for nature she remembers in idealised images. She writes,

Also schauten wir aus dem Fenster, wir waren ja in der Freiheit. Wir sahen richtige Menschen, die auf dem Acker arbeiteten. Die einen mähten das Gras, die anderen setzten irgendwas in den guten Boden. Wir sahen braune, schöne Kühe und Arbeitspferde, mitunter sogar einen Hasen und fröhliche, gutaussehende Kinder mit ihren Müttern (*Verborgenen*, p. 37).

These images she sees from the window of the train are all scenes that are familiar to her and that she relates to her life before the concentration camps. The images become idealised

and she recognises herself and the life she left behind. However, these images of the purity and peacefulness of nature occur much less frequently in Stojka's writing than in Franz's and therefore do not evoke the provincial, conservative associations of the concept of *Heimat* in the same way.<sup>72</sup> Stojka's relationship with landscape and *Heimat* does not use nature to equate it with freedom and bliss. While she described the tree in Bergen-Belsen as the giver of life, she also evoked the image of the trees surrounding the camp as police officers trapping the prisoners inside: 'Rund um das Lager war ein wunderschöner Tannenwald, die Bäume standen wie Polizisten. Man konnte nicht hindurchsehen, und so hatten wir keine Hoffnung, daß uns je irgendwer retten würde' (*Verborgenen*, pp. 57-58). As previously discussed, Stojka uses metaphor very sparingly in *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* and when she does, employs images of nature to represent certain memories. When she sees a man throw himself at the electric fence which separates him from his brother, she writes 'der Starkstrom zog ihn an sich, er hing da wie eine Spinne in ihrem Netz, den Kopf nach unten, die Füße nach oben' (*Verborgenen*, p. 22). She also describes the people in Auschwitz as 'die Menschen, die wie Tiere aussahen, dürr, geisterhaft' (*Verborgenen*, p. 22). These metaphors struggle to offer the reader something to understand about the inexpressible nature of Stojka's memories.

In *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, Stojka remembers times of hardship on the road and her longing for a place to stay where she would not have to move:

Wie ich aber größer war, habe ich mir gewünscht, einen festen Raum zu haben. Dann kann ich rausfahren, wann ich will, aber ich muß nicht. Immer wieder war es traurig für mich, wenn wir von unserem Winterquartier weg mußten. Ich hatte mich an mein Zimmer gewöhnt, ich hatte es mir schön eingerichtet. In Fischamend hatte ich mir die alte Holztüre so eingeprägt, sie war aus einem Brett, sicher aus einem dicken Baum, mit einem Spalt in der Mitte. Ich konnte durchschauen und wußte, wer weggeht und wer wiederkommt (*Reisende*, p. 134).

As with Franz, Améry's words of wanting to live among 'Dinge, die uns Geschichten erzählen'<sup>73</sup> can be related to Stojka's desire for a place which stands in opposition to the life of traveling with its constant new beginnings. By revealing the stories and the songs she learns from her aunt and the depiction of her life on the road in Austria, she confirms Aleida Assmann's assertion that 'das Land lebt in Tieren, Sinneswahrnehmungen und insbesondere Geschichten. Das Land wiederzugewinnen heisst, die Geschichten wiederzugewinnen, die in die Topographie dieses Landes eingeschrieben sind'.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.3.3 Identification / Connection

As previously discussed, Stojka's identification of Austria as her homeland is illustrated through her use of language and her representations of the Austrian landscape marked by Romani ex-

<sup>72</sup>cf. Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 1-29.

<sup>73</sup>Améry, p. 96.

<sup>74</sup>Assmann, pp. 292-293.

perience, but the Romani relationship with Austria is also defined through interactions with non-Romanies. She inscribes Romani values of the concept of Heimat to her relationship with Austria, using her narratives to reveal her relationship with the natural environment and marking it specifically as Romani. She is careful in the narration of her memories to avoid a tone of pure resentment and anger, though she does point out both moments of connection and moments of continued persecution in her texts. For while Stojka has emphasised her feeling of being at home in Austria, revealing a sense of security there, she also admits to being afraid. She writes, ‘und nach dem Krieg hatten wir auch Angst, ewige Angst. Kann so eine Zeit wieder kommen? Kann so etwas wieder passieren? Also ich könnte nicht sagen, daß wir ohne Angst gelebt hätten’ (*Reisende*, p. 135).

Particularly in her first narrative, Stojka emphasises the moments of kindness from non-Romanies she experienced in the camps and before. She remembers her sister’s boyfriend, Fritz, and his mother, who tried to hide the Stojkas before they were deported (*Verborgenen*, pp. 17-18). In Auschwitz Stojka remembers a Polish woman who gave her a pair of shoes, describing her as ‘eine liebe alte Frau [...]. Sie liebte Kinder über alles, doch selbst hatte sie keine’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 30). The *Blockälteste* in Ravensbrück, whom she affectionately referred to as Tante Ria, would warn Stojka’s family when the guards were coming and gave them extra food (*Verborgenen*, p. 42). Like Franz, Stojka remembers certain kindnesses of others when she describes her brother Ossi and herself having to carry pieces of turf back to the camp: ‘Für meinen kleinen Bruder Ossi war dies viel zu schwer, die Erde war noch feucht. Wenn wir unbeobachtet waren, nahm ich auch seinen Teil und preßte ihn an meinen Brustkorb. Der Kapo sah uns, aber er sagte nichts’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 24). She remembers the SS in Ravensbrück inviting all the children for a Christmas eve meal with warm milk, *Guglhupf* and *Knackwurst* (*Verborgenen*, p. 50). She also reveals a remarkable degree of empathy with the perpetrators when she observes ‘die SS Männer hatten keine große Freude mit uns, sie wären lieber bei ihren Familien gewesen. Doch sie mußten auch ihren Dienst tun und so ließen ihren Zorn an uns aus’ (*Verborgenen*, p. 36). This consideration for the SS and the projection of her own longing for home and family on them is a significant moment of connection for Stojka; she carries this consideration over into her discussion of the neo-Nazis in Germany in *Reisende auf dieser Welt*: ‘Sie [neo-Nazis] müssen ‘Heil’ schreien, um sich zu bestätigen. Nur so hat man Ehrfurcht vor ihnen [...]. Für mich sind sie Wesen ohne Seele, ich bedaure sie’ (*Reisende*, p. 146). In her narrative she includes these messages of understanding among her memories of horror and expresses the hope that her writing will influence the position of Romanies in Austria (and Europe). When asked if writing helped her overcome the pain of her memories, Stojka replied, ‘Natürlich, denn wenn ich schreibe und ich schreibe über die SS, ein Gedicht über sie, dann bin ich leichter weil, wenn die das einmal lesen, dann denk ich mir, vielleicht können die nachdenken was ihre Großväter oder ihre Urgroßeltern der Menschheit angetan

haben'.<sup>75</sup> The hope that her writing will contribute to the perpetrators being able to feel what they did to their victims echoes Améry's concept of 'Ressentiment'.

Although Stojka does describe these moments of connection and kindness as part of her dialogue with non-Romanies, she also expresses 'Ressentiment', which can be described as a reaction to the 'forgetting' of the victim's experience in the Holocaust by the perpetrators and Western post-war culture. Améry sees this forgetting as a second victimisation and demands that the perpetrators should feel the victimisation they carried out.<sup>76</sup> In the interview section of *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, Stojka is more open about her criticism concerning the dialogue between non-Romanies and Romanies. She remembers that in 1939, when they were no longer allowed to travel, how people's attitudes changed: 'Ob das ein guter Gadjé war oder ein böser, er hat böse werden müssen, sonst wäre er von den anderen schlecht beschrieben worden' (*Verborgenen*, p. 126). Despite having described the *Kongreßbad* as a place of familiarity and security where the people were kind to her family, she emphasises the fact that this security did not last, and that nobody came forward to stop the deportations. In fact, Stojka is very much aware of the lack of responsibility Austria took as a nation for the crimes of National Socialism.

Um uns hat sich überhaupt niemand gekümmert, was sollen sie sich auch kümmern? Es heißt ja, sie sind selbst besetzt worden, 1938 sind die Deutschen eingereist und haben alles kaputt gemacht. Also, was hat dann das Ganze mit den Österreichern zu tun? Gar nichts. Vielleicht wäre besser gewesen, wir wären drinnen geblieben in Auschwitz, dann hätten sie keine Schwierigkeiten (*Verborgenen*, p. 137).

This clear expression of anger and resentment at the landscape of forgetting that she and other surviving Romanies returned to is clear in her discussions with Berger. The pain of the memory of being screamed at in a market by a man who saw the number on her arm and said 'du dreckige Zigeunerin, du lebst noch? Dich hat der Hitler vergessen' (*Verborgenen*, p. 104) drives home the extent of her 'second victimisation'. She remembers the way she and her family were treated when they came back to Austria:

'Man hätte doch sagen können, hörst, die KZler sind mit nichts heimgekommen, wir müssen schauen, daß sie nicht wie der letzte Abschaum behandelt werden. Aber man wollte, daß wir der Abschaum der Menschen sind. Hätten sie das nicht gewollt, dann hätten sie es ja anders gemacht. Deswegen regt es mich immer wieder auf, wenn ich hör, daß irgendein alter Nazi wo herausgekommen ist und in Österreich aufgenommen und verherrlicht wird. Man breitet einen roten Teppich aus, man verköstigt ihn, er hat sein Heim, auf ihn paßt man auf. Wer hat für uns einen Teppich ausgebreitet, wie wir die ganze Misere hinter uns gehabt haben? (*Verborgenen*, 139).

In this passage, Stojka makes evident her longing for place and security as she points out the injustice of perpetrators receiving precisely these benefits. Her anger at the lack of being given

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<sup>75</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>76</sup>Améry, p. 103.

a chance to have a home, a settled place in Austria, even after she and her family had come back from such injustice and horror is clearly expressed in her dialogue with Karin Berger. The root of her anger and frustration lies in the lack of recognition for what she and other Romanies went through in the concentration camps, and the difficulties they faced in returning to an, at best indifferent and at worst hostile, Heimat.

In her narrative, Stojka lets the horrors of the camps she describes speak for themselves. The suffering and attacks on human dignity in the camps are related directly: 'Dort sind immer die Toten gelegen, oft mit dem Gesicht zur Wand, mit offenem Mund, und die Scheiße ist ihnen hinein. Wenn ein Mensch normal stirbt, dann hat er wenigstens noch eine gewisse Würde in sich' (*Verborgenen*, p. 99). She does make it clear from the beginning of her narrative that the threat of persecution and harm existed in her home environment, where she describes the Gestapo putting 'ein spanisches Gitter um unser kleines Holzhaus.[...] Ja, wir spürten Auschwitz schon in der Freiheit' (*Verborgenen*, p. 17). Loss of childhood and a feeling of security is an important theme in Stojka's books. Auschwitz itself is entwined in her memories of home, and home becomes part of her memory of Auschwitz when she speaks about being deported to and arriving in Auschwitz. After a small narrative break, the first sentence describing Auschwitz is striking: 'Das ist unsere neue Heimat' (*Verborgenen*, p. 21). She goes on with the description of the new place which offers no feeling of *Geborgenheit*, 'Es ist schon dunkel geworden, die Beleuchtung ist düster und öde. Der Stacheldraht ist mit Strom beladen' (*Verborgenen*, p. 21). Through this statement the reader is reminded of the child narrator and the child's perception of this horrible move to a new place. Jean Améry's idea of Heimat as 'Kindheits- und Jugendland' takes on the sinister dimensions of childhood spent and lost in Auschwitz.<sup>77</sup> The complete lack of orientation or a place where she can feel safe is emphasised in Stojka's text. She expresses here her knowledge that the place she knew to provide the feeling of Heimat for her before was no longer safe.

Stojka expresses an urgency in her text to provide her own safety and security in the place where she has lived most of her life. She says in *Wir leben im Verborgenen*: 'Ich sage, die Rom hier in Österreich nehmen sehr wenig Stellung zu ihrer Person, sie verteidigen sich nicht. Wenn sie jetzt hören, daß zum Beispiel ein Gadjo sagt: Der Scheiß-Zigeuner, dann könnte ihm der Zigeuner ja sagen: Du, warum sagst du das?' (*Verborgenen*, p. 153). Her writing becomes a tool for her to address the stereotypes and prejudices about Romanies prevalent in Austrian society. *Reisende auf dieser Welt* offers a significant continuation from *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* in that it shows the restoration of the connection with her homeland, and the second section tries to define Romani cultural identity in a more positive light by emphasising their spirit of community and their strong musical tradition:

Unsere alten Lieder kann man nur so beschreiben, daß man sagt, für uns sind

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<sup>77</sup>Améry, p. 84.



sie wie Gedichte. So wie sich ein anderer in Gedichtform ausdrückt, sich etwas Schweres von der Seele schreibt, so drücken wir uns in den Liedern aus. Die Roma konnten ja nicht lesen und schreiben (*Reisende*, p. 146).

Stojka highlights the Romani musical and oral tradition in this passage within her written text which is geared towards non-Romani readers. She provides these insights into Romani cultural life for her German-speaking readership, again marking Romani identity within Austria. As previously mentioned, she has emphasised her own longing for a place where she could feel safe and secure. The life of travelling that she remembers in *Reisende auf dieser Welt* further emphasises the difficulties of living on the road, dispelling the ‘lustige Zigeunerleben’ image. She remembers giving birth in the cold and the snow, riding along the road for days without the opportunity to pull over and stop, and farmers who were unwilling to let them pull over and camp on their land (*Reisende*, pp. 132-133). In fact, what she emphasises in both narratives and the interview sections accompanying them is a need and longing for security, *Geborgenheit*. She says

Hätte ich aber wählen können, dann hätte ich mir ausgesucht, ein normales Leben zu führen. Für mich wäre schön gewesen, alle Verwandten um mich zu haben und brav in die Schule zu gehen. So hätte ich was Anständiges gelernt und wäre nicht gezwungen gewesen, hausieren zu gehen. [...] Mein Vater hätte nicht sterben müssen, mein kleiner Bruder hätte nicht sterben müssen. Und von meinen Leuten gäbe es noch viele Überlebende (*Reisende*, p. 135).

Stojka’s wish in this passage, to be able to change who she is in order to live safely in Austria, presents the reader with an image of desperation to feel secure within Austria’s borders.

### 3.4 Narrating Experience

Stojka’s writing can be said to be, and is most likely also intended to be, a witness testimony of her experiences in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. Her writing conveys what Laub describes as ‘an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one’s story’; therefore, it deserves to be discussed for its literary qualities of expressing identity and experience as well as its importance as testimony of her experiences in the concentration camps.<sup>78</sup> It is evident from Stojka’s body of work, where she represents her memories in many different ways, including painting, poetry and prose, that she has experimented with various genres of representation. She, like Philomena Franz, tests the boundaries of genre by expressing her identity through writing and working through traumatic memories. In discussing Stojka’s autobiographical writing, it is useful to consider James Young’s observation that ‘even if narrative cannot document events, or constitute perfect *factuality*, it can document the *actuality* of writer

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<sup>78</sup>Laub, ‘Truth and Testimony’, p. 63.

and text'.<sup>79</sup> Stojka's writing should be read for the importance of her memories as documentation of the suffering experienced by Romanies in the concentration camps, but also for its literary value.

The structure of *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* does not take the form of a linear narrative in the same way as Philomena Franz's *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*; this can perhaps be explained simply by the fact that Stojka was only ten years old when she was deported to Auschwitz in 1943. The narrative is a collection of scenes representing the moments Stojka remembers. For example, Stojka writes of her brother's death, then moves directly on to an account of the humiliation of having to wash in front of the SS-officers, and then writes about covering up her younger brother's body when she finds in a pile of dead (*Verborgenen*, 26-27). In contrast to Franz's work, which is divided into chapters, Stojka's work is divided into two titled sections with no further chapter breaks. The first section, the narrative of her memories, is called 'Ist das die ganze Welt?' and is only divided by asterisks, allowing the reader to follow her memories which are documented as stream of consciousness. This contributes to Stojka's invitation to the reader and the intimacy of her relation of these childhood memories. She writes 'wenn ich alle meine Gedanken niederschreiben könnte, wäre dies sicher ein endloses Buch der Leiden. Doch meine Gedanken laufen schneller als meine Hände alles zu Papier bringen können' (*Verborgenen*, p. 20). In fact, in the second section called 'Du darfst keine andere sein', which provides the reader with the opportunity to see the author of the text separated from her narrative in the form of a scripted conversation between Stojka and her editor, Karin Berger, she tells Berger that she only wrote whenever she could steal a moment from her household duties and life with her family (*Verborgenen*, p. 97).

*Reisende auf dieser Welt* adheres to the same general structure, with the narrative section detailing her memories of the post-war years entitled 'Wir machten das beste daraus', and the incorporation of a second section made up of excerpts from a discussion with Berger called 'Solange es Roma gibt werden sie singen'. In this book, only Stojka's voice is present in the discussion section, with Berger's questions missing. In contrast to *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, Stojka's second narrative is told from the perspective of herself as an adult and her voice takes the reader through memories of her life after the concentration camps in a chronological form of storytelling. The author's voice is more confident and assured in this narrative as she now speaks as an adult. Considering Reiter's assertion that writing one's memories allows the writer to structure these into a coherent story in relation to *Wir leben im Verborgenen*, the question arises as to whether Stojka was able to order her memories in this way in order to gain the satisfaction of putting them in a form that would provide an ending or conclusion for those experiences.<sup>80</sup> I would argue that despite the sometimes disjointed juxtaposition of memories,

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<sup>79</sup>James Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1988), p. 37.

<sup>80</sup>Reiter, p. 69.

Stojka's *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* does follow the standard narrative structure of beginning briefly with her life before the camps and then illustrating the memories in each of those camps from Auschwitz to Ravensbrück and finally Bergen Belsen, ending with their liberation from the camps and return to Vienna. The last line of the narrative is 'und so nahm das Leben für uns sein Lauf' (*Verborgenen*, 82). This line points to the chronological structure of the narrative and suggests a caesura between the experiences of the camps and the life that came after it. *Wir leben im Verborgenen* perhaps provided her with the voice she needed to articulate the traumatic memories of her past and to overcome a loss of identity, giving her more confidence in her identity as a writer.

The way an individual turns their life story into a coherent piece of writing and the visible piece of writing which represents the individual's working through of traumatic events are, in Kushner's words, 'bound together in creating the individual's identity'.<sup>81</sup> One of the great strengths of Stojka's writing in both *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* is her expression of her identity as a writer and an Austrian Romani woman. In her descriptions of the horrors of the concentration camps and later the loss of her son to drug addiction, poignancy is added through the deeply personal narrative voice, first of the child and then of the mother remembering. Stojka's expression of her individuality in her writing also presents a sense of an urgency to establish a Romani group identity through her concern for the way her people are treated. As previously discussed in reference to Franz's writing, Laura Marcus suggests that marginalised groups have used autobiography to explore and to record histories that might have otherwise been forgotten.<sup>82</sup> It is evident from Stojka's writing that she does want to write down a particular history for the first time, that of Austrian Romanies and of her family. She wanted more than to say 'Zigeuner waren auch im KZ'.<sup>83</sup> Stojka is also known as a political activist and central to her motivation for publishing her work was a need to establish an identity for herself and a sense of Romani group identity. Stojka herself describes the importance of her first book for the Romani community in Austria by saying,

Es war schon wichtig, dass jemand den Schritt nach Außen macht. Aber ohne Bücher, ohne Schreiben wäre es nie gelungen [...]. Es hat sich Niemand gekümmert. Der österreichischer Staat hätte sich kümmern sollen. Nach dem Buch ist es dann bergauf gegangen. Es ist sehr viel geschehen. Und es geschieht noch immer.<sup>84</sup>

This aspect of her writing is important and evident also in the scripted conversations with Berger where she repeatedly emphasises her determination to deconstruct the accepted stereotypical images of 'Zigeuner'.

It is useful to consider the 'internal dynamics' of Ceija Stojka's work, and to explore it for

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<sup>81</sup>Kushner, p. 37.

<sup>82</sup>Marcus, p. 269.

<sup>83</sup>Stojka, Interview, 2007.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

its own unique qualities and characteristics.<sup>85</sup> As previously discussed, *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* can be seen as Stojka's own working through of her traumatic memories, but its publication is the assertion of an individual and group identity, forcing her readership to acknowledge the atrocities committed against the Romani community during the Third Reich. *Reisende auf dieser Welt* takes this willingness to provide readers with a more realistic image of Romani life in Austria further by illustrating Stojka's life after the liberation of the concentration camps. She provides this in a form that the *Gadje* require. The written word is linked to longevity and authenticity in non-Romani Western culture and particularly to Holocaust testimony, where the need to document experiences of the camps in written form has been seen as crucial to combat the forgetting of it.<sup>86</sup> Stojka had become aware of this and knew what she had to do in order to combat the forgetting of the Romani Holocaust.<sup>87</sup> Her political agenda in writing is much more obvious in her volume of poetry published by the EYE Literaturverlag, which describes itself as 'Literatur der Wenigerheiten'.<sup>88</sup> Although Stojka does not illustrate as much of the lifestyle that was lost as Franz does in her narrative, she does throughout *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* depict strong family relationships, a deep connection with nature, and the unique cultural attributes of Romani life through her use of language and vivid images. It is possible then, that her primary motivation for writing was to work through the traumatic memories that haunt her, but her reasons for publishing look beyond those experiences and are her attempt to be the one who takes that crucial step 'nach Außen'.<sup>89</sup> Stojka is prepared to accept the responsibility discussed previously in relation to Philomena Franz's autobiographical writing. Stojka, along with Franz, is one of the few Romani Holocaust survivors to have published their memories; this places a burden of responsibility on Stojka's writing as one of the few documents to reveal authentic and subjective historical experience concerning the Holocaust.

Stojka's writing documents her memories of the Holocaust with the aim of working through those memories in order to establish a group identity and her own individual identity as well as to document historical experience. Laura Marcus's assertion that one of the main problems with the discussion of autobiography in relation to genre is that certain literary forms can provide models for structuring narratives of personal or life experiences, again presents the problem of genre.<sup>90</sup> Despite the lack of clear literary beginning, middle and ending in Stojka's narrative, she does create a sense that she is the heroine of the story, along with her mother. She writes of one memory of her mother stealing food for the children,

Ich hatte sehr große Angst um meine Mama. Es war alles ganz dunkel. Man hörte nur die SS schreien...Meine Mama packte eine große Steckrübe, aber ein SS-Mann

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<sup>85</sup>Kushner, p. 34.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid, pp. 18-19.

<sup>87</sup>Stojka, Interview, 2007.

<sup>88</sup>See Ceija Stojka's *Meine Wahl zu Schreiben - Ich kann es nicht* (2003).

<sup>89</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>90</sup>Marcus, p. 233.

hatte sie gesehen und schlug ihr auf die Hand. Aber sie ließ die Rübe nicht fallen.  
[...] Ich war sehr stolz auf meine Mama, daß sie so mutig gewesen war, denn  
wenn sie nicht so gewesen wäre, wären wir wahrscheinlich auch schon auf dem  
Totenhaufen gelegen (*Verborgenen*, 64).

As is apparent in this passage, Stojka's writing goes beyond documenting facts of what happened. She writes with an urgency and a style that involves the reader in the moments she recalls, investing in the lives of her mother and herself. The extent to which Stojka's responsibility to document the Romani experience in the concentration camps is compromised by her putting her memories together into a coherent narrative would be difficult to determine. Dori Laub warns that 'the longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor's conception of it, so much so that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events'.<sup>91</sup> Stojka only wrote down her memories decades after the liberation of the concentration camps and does not call into question the truth of her memories. However, the literary qualities of her text combined with her documenting of events that actually happened, encourages us to consider the blurring of the traditionally accepted ideas of testimony and of autobiographical writing.

Paul John Eakin, in *Fictions in Autobiography* argues that the 'distinction between fact and fiction is therefore invalidated, because fact or reality shares the same form as fiction or narrative, while "intention" is made identical with "reference" - the autobiographical truth to which the Autobiographer refers is his or her intention'.<sup>92</sup> It is useful then, to consider Stojka's 'intentions' in this text. As with Franz's work, this text is not intended to be solely a way of working through trauma, but also to go back to that fascination with words that Stojka had as a child and to establish her identity as a writer and to combine her desire to provide a more positive group image for Romanies in Austria. Although Stojka's writing conveys more of the rupture and silence in its structure than Franz's narrative does through Stojka's use of the child narrator in *Wir leben im Verborgenen* and the presentation of her memories through stream of consciousness, it does use elements from different genres to convey the trauma she experienced. The author is writing a history that needs to be written as well as her own personal story.

As in Franz's narrative, the presence of the editor is felt throughout Stojka's books. *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* opens with a foreword by Karin Berger, and the second section of the book is a transcript of a detailed discussion of Stojka's memories between Berger and Stojka. The narrative, told from the perspective of Stojka as a child, is attributed solely to Stojka. The fact that she wrote the text herself is very important to her, and she emphasises that the actual process of writing was an experience she wanted to have. She says of the number of others who then had their memories recorded with the help of someone else:

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<sup>91</sup>Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', p. 64.

<sup>92</sup>Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), p. 3.

Viele haben sich schreiben lassen. Die haben selbst erzählt und Jemand hat dann mitgeschrieben. Aber selbst zu schreiben — ich wollte schon selbst schreiben. Weil mich die Buchstaben von der Schulzeit — das war nur eine kurze Zeit von vier Monaten — haben mich schon sehr fasziniert.<sup>93</sup>

After Berger read the original document and told Stojka it should be published, Stojka had her niece read through and correct it. She describes how she tried to give a mistake-free copy to the Picus Verlag, but they insisted on seeing the original manuscript.

Also ihr (Karin Berger) hab ich das Original gegeben dann hab ich das wieder versteckt weil ich ja das Manuskript jetzt von meiner Nichte gehabt hab' und das war richtig geschrieben... mit Stolz... also es sind keine Fehler drin. Aber der Picus Verlag wollte das Original. Also hab ich das hergegeben.<sup>94</sup>

For the publishers and in the end for Stojka, it was important that the narrative was published the way she had written it with only the necessary corrections for grammar and spelling. There is no indication for the readers of *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* and *Reisende auf dieser Welt* as to what has been corrected from the original text and how much of the structuring of the narrative was done with the help of an outside editor. It is significant, however, that Stojka's collection of poetry *Meine Wahl zu Schreiben* was published with examples of her original, handwritten poems. The letters are large and uneven; spelling mistakes are not uncommon. In this volume the corrections are credited to her niece, Nuna Stojka. However, in her first two narratives, the presence and support of journalist and writer Karin Berger is important as, similarly to Reinhold Lehmann's and Wolfgang Benz's contributions to Franz's text, these pledges of authenticity and credibility from respected members of society could be seen to be a necessary component of German-language Romani writing.

The intended readership for this text is also an interesting issue and again raises the point Laura Marcus makes in regard to self-representations by members of marginalised groups that the identity they want to reveal through their writing may be compromised by their intended readership as being members of the majority population who have some social influence.<sup>95</sup> Stojka indicates that her writing is aimed at non-Romanies in that she wants to help dispel the stereotypical 'Zigeuner' image, but she also makes it clear that she wants other Romanies to have their history told and to feel proud of their cultural identity.<sup>96</sup> When asked if other Romanies had read her writing, she replied 'ja, natürlich. Sie geben es nicht zu. Nicht zu mir. Aber ich weiss, daß sie's gelesen haben'.<sup>97</sup> This statement suggests a problematic relationship between the author and the community she professes to represent and raises questions over the authenticity of her representation of these people if they do not feel themselves to be included in

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<sup>93</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Marcus, p. 290.

<sup>96</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

her intended readership. Stojka says that she originally wrote the manuscript with her children in mind as an intended readership, 'damit die Kinder nie wieder aufhören nachzudenken was geschehen kann durch ein schlimmes Regime'.<sup>98</sup> Some Romani storytellers are also making a switch to the written word, in the interest of the preservation of these stories and to ensure the transference of this cultural identity to the next generation. Reinhold Lagrene, a German Romani says of the Romani community's tradition of storytelling:

Möglicherweise trägt uns auf Dauer die mündliche Überlieferung allein nicht mehr. Ich selbst spüre das Bedürfnis, all das, was ich weiß niederzuschreiben und auf Papier festzuhalten. Dieses Bedürfnis wurzelt in meiner eigenen Unsicherheit darüber, ob meine Generation und meiner Kinder dieser Entwicklung zum Trotz die Kraft haben werden, das, was unsere Kultur ausmacht, an die nachfolgende Generation überzeugend weiterzuleiten.<sup>99</sup>

Stojka's inclusion of the Romani language in her narrative does show that she intends to include Romanies in her readership, but her translation of those words caters to her intended German audience.

### 3.5 Reception of Ceija Stojka's Work

Stojka has become the accepted and well publicised voice of the Romani Holocaust experience. She has been the Romani writer most often cited in secondary sources that mention the Romani Holocaust experience and has been the most widely discussed in academic articles addressing Romani self-representation or literature. Her work has been given publicity through the work of Karin Berger, who helped her get her writing published. This is due possibly to her willingness to speak out about her experiences and to include herself in Austrian society. I would also suggest that it may have to do with her offering readers a glimpse into Romani life in Austria in *Reisende auf dieser Welt*. It is possible that for a time *Wir Leben im Verborgenen* was considered the first Romani survivor account of the Holocaust as Stojka and Berger were unaware of the publication of Philomena Franz's *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* by Herder in 1985.<sup>100</sup> Thus the misleading remark by Karin Berger in the foreword to *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, 'Ihre [Stojkas] Auzeichnungen sind die bisher einzigen von Roma oder Sinti schriftlich festgehaltenen Erinnerungen an die Schrecken der Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager'.<sup>101</sup> Stojka's book met with a very positive reception in Austria. Stojka recalls giving the manuscript to the Picus Verlag and the success that followed, 'Also hab ich das [Manuskript] hergegeben und dann kam das erste Buch raus. Das kam so schnell im Fernsehen. Es war noch feucht, war noch

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Lagrene, p. 99.

<sup>100</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 127.

<sup>101</sup>Karin Berger in *Verborgenen*, p. 9.

gar nicht gedruckt mit der Deckel, haben sie es herausgebracht und gleich haben die Leute hier angerufen!’<sup>102</sup>

At Ravensbrück, a video clip of an interview with Stojka plays on an endless loop and her work is sold in the bookstore there. Stojka’s *Träume ich, dass ich lebe? befreit aus Bergen Belsen* has been translated into Italian, and *Wir leben im Verborgenen* has been translated into Dutch and Japanese.<sup>103</sup> It is interesting to note that the focus of these translations is Stojka’s experience of the concentration camps. *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, Stojka’s attempt to give non-Romanies a glimpse into the lives of Romanies has not been translated. The openness of which Karin Berger wrote in her introduction to *Wir leben im Verborgenen* has made Stojka an ideal spokesperson for the Romani experience of the Holocaust.

Stojka is cited in academic works referring to Romani survivor accounts and has had a handful of scholarly articles written about her work.<sup>104</sup> She is the only Romani Holocaust survivor whose work is referred to in Reiter’s ‘*Auf daß sie entsteigen der Dunkelheit*’. In her article on Ceija Stojka’s writing, Susan Tebbutt remarks that

given the alarming rise in the incidence of racist attacks on Roma in Austria in the 1990s, I feel it is important in any consideration of contemporary Austrian women’s writing to recognise the contribution of Stojka’s autobiographical writing, in order to highlight new images of a marginalised group whose members’ identity and experiences are far from being homogeneous.<sup>105</sup>

Here, Tebbutt recognises the importance of Stojka’s writing for working towards exactly what Stojka wants to achieve: a wider appreciation and understanding of who Romanies in Austria are. Her books have received praise from the press which highlight the experiences she illustrates in her books. *Der Spiegel* wrote ‘Ceija Stojka schreibt wie ein Kind: unsentimental, unbeirrbar geradeaus und schrecklich genau...Sie ist eine stolze, starke Frau; ihr Buch richtet sich gegen Unterwerfung und Schweigen, gegen das “Leben im Verborgenen,” und was sie zu erzählen hat, ist außergewöhnlich’.<sup>106</sup> She has received further positive reviews on her books and films from many other newspapers and magazines throughout the years.<sup>107</sup> These articles praise her bold step in writing about her experiences, but, with few exceptions, do not engage with her work in any critical way. Articles have been published in newspapers and magazine

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<sup>102</sup>Stojka, Interview.

<sup>103</sup>Ceija Stojka, *Forse sogno di vivere: una bambina rom a Bergen-Belsen* (Florence: Giuntina, 2007); Ceija Stojka, Karin Berger, and Hans Driessen, *We leven in het verborgene: herinneringen van een Roma-zigeunerin* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2006); Ceija Stojka, Elisabeth Guttenberger, and Matin Kaneko, *Nachisu kyosei shuyojo to roma: seikansha no taikenki to shogen* (Tokyo: Akashishoten, 1991).

<sup>104</sup>See, in particular, Tebbutt, ‘Marginalization and Memories’ and Eder, ‘Roma können nicht nur singen... Einblick in die fremde Welt einer neuen Literatur. Zum neu erschienenen Buch von Ceija Stojka’, *SCRIPT*, February 1992, pp. 9-12. See also Eder, *Geboren*, pp. 127-131.

<sup>105</sup>Tebbutt, ‘Marginalization and Memories’, p. 149.

<sup>106</sup>‘Autobiographie einer Zigeunerin’ *Der Spiegel*, 13 February 1989.

<sup>107</sup>See, for example: Erich Hackl, “‘Aber die Wahrheit, die wahre Wahrheit...’. “Ceija Stojka”, ein Film über Stolz, Angst und Erinnern’, *Die Presse*, 5 February, 2000, p. 4; Peter Paul Wiplinger, ‘Lebenskraft gegen Barbarei’, *Die Furche* 21, 22 May 2003, p. 18; Sabine E. Dengscherz, ‘Trauma fürs Leben’, *Die Furche* 17, 16 February 2006, p. 18.



telling of Stojka's life and her work whenever she has won a prize or has had an exhibition. The articles focus on relating some of the experiences that her books illustrate and emphasising her work as a Romani rights activist. Her artwork has been exhibited all over the world.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.6 Locating Place**

Through finding a voice with which to communicate her experiences of the concentration camps, Stojka has established a place for herself in Austrian history and landscape. Her unique use of language shows her roots in both Austrian and Romani language tradition, and as she works through the traumatic memories of the Holocaust, she provides readers with original and new images of Romani identity and culture. Her portrayals of her relationship with her homeland, her dialogue with its people and her insights into the lives of Romani women in and after the concentration camps assert her position within the landscape of Austria, alerting readers to the continued lack of and need for a feeling of security in that position and place.

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<sup>108</sup>See Susan Tebbutt, 'Disproportional Representation', pp. 159-177.

## Chapter 4

# Losing Homelands: Alfred Lessing and Karl Stojka

### 4.1 Leaving Homelands

Alfred Lessing and Karl Stojka address the loss of the Romani traditional way of life in their autobiographical narratives whereas Philomena Franz and Ceija Stojka worked to define and claim space for Romani tradition and identity within the landscape of Germany and Austria in their texts. Alfred Lessing, from Germany, and Karl Stojka<sup>1</sup>, from Austria, both wrote their accounts of surviving the persecution they faced as Romanies in the Third Reich. Alfred Lessing published *Mein Leben im Versteck: Wie ein deutscher Sinto den Holocaust überlebte*<sup>2</sup> in 1993 and in 1994 Karl Stojka published *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause: Das Leben und Wandern des Zigeuners Karl Stojka*.<sup>3</sup>

Alfred Lessing's narrative details his escape from imprisonment in the concentration camps as a young man; his musical talents help him to avoid the atrocities of the camps. Lessing did not witness the horrors of the camps; his traumatic experience is caused by the journey away from his homeland to escape persecution and his strategic denial of his Romani identity. This denial, he explains repeatedly throughout his text, was necessary for his survival. His book, as he states plainly in the title, illustrates his life in hiding and functions also as the final stage in

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Stojka is one of Ceija Stojka's two older brothers. Their oldest brother, Mongo Stojka, also wrote a narrative of his memories of the Holocaust titled *Papierene Kinder: Zerstörung und Neubeginn einer Rom Familie* (Vienna: Molden, 2000). Mongo Stojka and his work will not be discussed in detail in this thesis for reasons of space and maintaining a fair balance of German and Austrian writers. Additionally, Mongo Stojka's book includes many excerpts from Karl Stojka's memories published in *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause* and in the catalogues for his exhibitions. For a discussion and comparison of the work of these three siblings, see Lorely French, 'An Austrian Roma Family Remembers: Trauma and Gender in Autobiographies by Ceija, Karl, and Mongo Stojka' in *German Studies Review* 31 1, 2008 (65 - 86).

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Lessing, *Mein Leben im Versteck: Wie ein deutscher Sinto den Holocaust überlebte* (Düsseldorf: Zebulon, 1993).

<sup>3</sup>Karl Stojka and Reinhard Pohanka, *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause: Das Leben und Wandern des Zigeuners Karl Stojka* (Vienna: Picus, 1994).

his emergence from hiding. In this text, Lessing deals with the complexity of being a German Romani by confronting his experiences in WWII, highlighting his experiences as a Romani who feared persecution, and as a German who witnessed and experienced the devastation of the Dresden bombings. In contrast, Karl Stojka experienced the atrocities of the concentration camps when he was imprisoned in Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Flossenbürg. He works through the traumatic memories of the Holocaust in his narrative against the backdrop of the hardships involved in travelling through Europe and the United States later in his life, emphasising his sorrow at what he sees as the loss of a Romani cultural identity in Austria. For Stojka, this loss is the lasting crime of Hitler's Holocaust: 'Die Traditionen wurden gebrochen, das Zigeunerleben hat er uns ausgetrieben' (*Zuhause*, p. 104). Romani identity is based on a cultural framework, the idea of sharing certain traditions and based on interactions with others.<sup>4</sup> Stojka deals with this loss of Romani identity in his text, marking his experiences with reference to Romani culture.

Aleida Assmann writes that 'Trauma ist das Andere der heroischen Erzählung, es steht [...] für die Störung, ja Zerstörung von Identität'.<sup>5</sup> In *Mein Leben im Versteck* and *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, both authors struggle to confront and address this destruction of identity, whether it emerges as the strategic denial or traumatic loss of Romani cultural identity. In doing so, both authors address their problematic relationships with their homelands – the experiences which are particular to their German or Austrian identities and those experiences which are unique to them as Romanies. Ceija Stojka and Franz have advocated the place of Romani culture in Austria and Germany; Lessing and Karl Stojka reveal the holes left in this Romani landscape of their home countries by the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust. The complexity of the relationship between homeland and belonging and asserting Romani identity is represented through the story of journeying, of leaving these homelands and returning to them, hopeful to find what was lost. In this chapter, I will explore these texts in terms of their expression of identity and the strong sense of homeland they express in light of the journeys they describe and the long period of silence that preceded them.

## 4.2 Alfred Lessing

### 4.2.1 Trauma and Identity

Alfred Lessing was born in 1921 and from the age of four lived in the family flat belonging to his uncle in Herford, north Germany. Lessing, like Franz, confidently identifies himself as a German Sinto.<sup>6</sup> While he makes clear that he is writing of the victimisation of all groups of

<sup>4</sup>Reemtsma, pp. 60-63. See also Kapralski, pp. 218-219.

<sup>5</sup>Assmann, *Vergangenheit*, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup>This is the masculine singular form of Sinti. Feminine sing. is "Sintezza". Although he consistently refers to himself as a Sinto, I will adhere to the English term Romani also when describing Lessing and his family as the

Romanies, it is important to note in his text the emphasis on his Sinti identity. This was also made clear in Franz's narrative where she proudly asserts that she is a 'Zigeunerin vom Stamm der Sinti'. Tebbutt observes 'as had happened in the case of other marginalised groups, such as the Jews, a hierarchy was emerging, in which the more established Romanies were beginning to feel threatened by the presence of the poorer Roma from eastern Europe'.<sup>7</sup> As the Sinti had been resident in Germany and in Austria since the fifteenth century, when their presence was first officially recorded in Hildesheim, they considered themselves to have established a place in Germany for themselves, which they did not want to see threatened by other groups.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with the Romani civil rights movement and its connection with a collective memory of the Holocaust, Lessing writes about his experience in the Holocaust as the experience of the Romanies, but also wants firmly to assert his identity within that larger group as a German Sinto.

His assertion of this Sinti identity further establishes his claim to space within German landscape and history in that, like Ceija Stojka, he can claim to have ancestors buried there. However, Lessing's text deals primarily with his victimisation as a 'Zigeuner' and thus it is primarily the Romani identity that he lays claim to in this text, noting the persecution Romanies faced as a larger group and the loss of this cultural identity after the war. A significant element in Lessing's text is how he highlights his identity as German and Romani; the inability of some to acknowledge the co-existence of these two integral parts of his identity makes a clear statement about the fragile position of Romanies in Germany. For example, when Lessing is invited by Jimmy Dorsten to come for an audition with his band, Lessing experiences difficulty gaining entry to the concert hall because the doorman immediately recognises him as a *Zigeuner*. When Lessing produces the card Dorsten gave him, the doorman responds by saying 'Ausländer, alle gleich' (*Versteck*, p. 35). He reveals little understanding for Dorsten's (himself an 'Ausländer' from America) willingness to have anything to do with a *Zigeuner*. Again, later in the text when Lessing remembers being put into a Russian prison in Lemberg after escaping from the German army,<sup>9</sup> he describes his mixed feelings when the German army takes command of the town:

Die deutschen Soldaten jubelten, tanzten, und fielen sich vor Freude um den Hals. Natürlich freute ich mich auch, aber nur für eine kurze Zeit. Ich war still geworden, denn mit dem Kommen der Deutschen kehrte für mich auch die drohende Gefahr und die Angst vor Verfolgung zurück. [...] Grotesk mutete es mir ein, daß die gleichen deutschen Soldaten, die mich als Sinto eingesperrt hatten und in ein Konzentrationslager bringen wollten, mir jetzt das Leben retteten (*Versteck*, p. 82).

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English word does include all Romani groups, including Sinti.

<sup>7</sup>Tebbutt, 'Mauer im Kopf', p. 272.

<sup>8</sup>Reemtsma, p. 52 and Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, p. 74. See also Fraser, pp. 8-9 on the boundaries Romanies themselves establish between different Romani communities.

<sup>9</sup>See Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 193-199 on Romanies in the military service. See also Lewy, pp. 93-97.

Lessing also emphasises his identity as a musician throughout his text; it is his musical talent which allows him to transcend the paradox of his German and Romani identity which emerges painfully in this situation and to thereby avoid the concentration camps of the Third Reich.

Lessing is forced to deny his Romani identity in order to avoid persecution under National Socialism, a situation which brings out acutely the clash between, on one hand, his sense of Germany as Heimat steeped in the tradition of his ancestors and as a place where he lives and works, and on the other the fact of his rejection by his Heimat, nowhere more evident than in the National Socialist idea of the criminal and racially inferior 'Zigeuner'.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in 1938, Lessing was required to have photographs taken of him from all sides and to have his fingerprints taken. In the August of 1939, Dorsten and his band left Germany for the United States and Lessing was left on his own; his mother had died in 1936.

First, Lessing leaves the claustrophobic atmosphere of Berlin and comes across a travelling circus in the forest where the atmosphere draws him into an immediate connection with his past: 'Tief sog ich die würzige Luft ein und musste an die Wälder und Wiesen denken, über die ich zusammen mit meiner Mutter gewandert war. Der Duft blühender Blumen und das Geräusch summender Insekten erfüllte meine Erinnerung' (*Versteck*, p. 55). In recalling this encounter with the circus, Lessing also supplies the reader with a degree of narrative drama in revealing that the female proprietor actually once knew his father very well and recognises Lessing as being his son. However, she impresses upon him that he must not reveal his Romani identity to the others in the troupe: 'Hier bei uns fällst du nicht als Sinto auf. Wir sagen einfach, du seist mein Neffe. Die Leute werden das akzeptieren. Du sagst Tante Franzi zu mir' (*Versteck*, p. 58). He leaves the company in time to avoid being reported by one of the other members who has discovered his identity; he then decides to join the German army hoping for the 'Möglichkeit zur Flucht in ein freies Land, zur Flucht aus dem Gefängnis Deutschland' (*Versteck*, p. 67). Lessing's conclusion that to escape the 'prison of Germany' he must join the German army is ironic, but the main appeal of the army for him is the prospect of movement – 'die Flucht' – and the possibility of journeying to a place where Romani life and nature were not threatened by the war and the ideology of the Third Reich. Lessing's ultimate plan here is to flee to America, where he imagines he would be able to play music and enjoy an unthreatened existence. He writes: 'In meinem deutschen Paß stand kein Vermerk, daß ich "Zigeuner" war. Wenn ich Glück hatte, würde ich bei der Wehrmacht nicht als Sinto erkannt. Und wenn ich mit meiner Einheit erstmal an irgendeine Grenze des Deutschen Reiches versetzt würde, gelang mir vielleicht die Flucht ins Ausland' (*Versteck*, p. 68). Throughout his text, Lessing makes connections to nature being part of Romani identity and he illustrates the confines of the cities

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<sup>10</sup>See Michael Zimmermann 'The National Socialist "Solution of the Gypsy Question": Central Decisions, Local Initiatives and Their Interrelation', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 15 3 (2001), 412-427. Here, p. 414. This provides a brief, comprehensive overview of the persecution of the Romanies according to these terms and should be seen as a supplement to Zimmermann's *Rassenutopie und Genozid* (1996), emphasising more recent research.

as claustrophobic, emphasising his idea of the 'Gefängnis Deutschland'. His journey with the army takes him to Russia and then back to Germany again, all the while concealing his identity and relying on his judgement as to the right times to flee persecution. He represents his 'story' in terms of emerging from this hiding, revealing his identity, now for the first time as a German Romani writer and Holocaust survivor, writing his story in German.

Lessing's narrative is fundamentally different from Stojka's and Franz's narratives in that it cannot bear witness to the horrors of the concentration camp because he was not there, except for one brief visit, as a musician rather than a prisoner. He is able to avoid the traumatic experience of deportation and imprisonment in Auschwitz which are the substance of most other German-language Romani narratives. I would argue, however, that the deception he is forced to commit regarding his own identity is in itself a traumatic experience. Because under National Socialism Romanies were cast as inferior, Lessing could not admit to his Romani identity without the fear of persecution, imprisonment and death. He could not pursue his musical career with a renowned band because he was forced into hiding. At the opening of the book, in a short section titled 'An den Leser', he emphasises his intention in writing: 'Ich will den Lesern zeigen, dass auch die Sinti "ganz normale Menschen" sind. Menschen mit Gefühlen, Ängsten und Hoffnungen. Wir sind deutsche Staatsbürger, mit allen Rechten und Pflichten' (*Versteckt*, p. 14). Having to escape Germany in the first place disrupts his sense of belonging and ancestry; he struggles throughout the text with his identification of 'Gefängnis Deutschland' and the nature idyll he associates with his childhood and Romani life.

In looking back on his time with his parents, he tends to romanticise the memories of the campfire evenings; however, he also includes in his narrative the idea of travelling to escape persecution and acknowledges the dangers his family faced travelling. However, another traumatic experience is presented at the beginning of this text: that of his father being violently killed by two farmers when Lessing was four. This is the only part of the narrative where Lessing describes the brutal violence carried out against Romanies. He relates the story to the reader in the voice of his uncle, who tells it to a young Lessing:

Die Blicke des Försters schweiften über das Lager hinweg. Er sah das Feuer, den Wagen, den alten Klepper, der am Wagen angebunden war. Dann blieben seine Blicke wie erstarrt an die Fellen der zwei Wildkaninchen hängen. 'Du verdammter Zigeuner, du hast gewildert, das wird dich teuer zu stehen kommen. Männer, packt sie.' Das war der Funke, der übersprang, die Explosion. Aus war es mit der schönen Märchenwelt. Die Ruhe und Frieden, die eben noch geherrscht hatten, wurden zum Inferno. Die Hölle brach los (*Versteckt*, p. 23).

The men take his father away and Lessing's mother looks for him all night only to find a freshly dug grave. This scene is for Lessing the one that ends the *heile Welt* of his childhood or what he describes here as 'die schöne Märchenwelt'. The life on the road which he remembers as so idyllic ends because his father is killed for the crime of killing two rabbits. The murder of his

father acquires a special position in Lessing's text and retrospectively foreshadows the large-scale victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust. He only experienced the kind of travelling lifestyle that Ceija Stojka illustrates in *Reisende auf dieser Welt* until the age of three or four, but he mourns the loss of this kind of life and tradition and makes the connection between the murder of his father and the traumatic disruption of their traditional way of life and his mother's resulting ill health in their cold and run-down flat. His association of being trapped in this damp flat echoes his repetition of the idea of 'Gefängnis Deutschland' which began with the murder of his father and the end of the childhood idyll of living close to nature.

Lessing's narration of the violent murder of his father and later the death of his mother, could be seen as a 'working through' of these traumatic memories.<sup>11</sup> He uses the memory of what happened to his father and the narration of this experience in his text as a means of demonstrating what was lost during National Socialism and the threat to security Romanies in Germany can still feel when they continue to practice their traditional lifestyle. His narrative is carefully constructed, researched and put together in a coherent form which suggests that he had a clear idea of what he wanted to get across through the writing of these memories and the historical information he chooses to present. He strives in this text to represent the difficulty Romanies face in feeling secure in their identity as Romanies and as Germans.

#### 4.2.2 Heimat

Lessing does not present a clear image of Heimat in his text. His relationship with his home country is represented in a more complex manner than in the texts of Franz and Stojka because, while he does repeatedly refer to Germany as 'Gefängnis Deutschland', he also remembers the natural beauty of his homeland; additionally, his portrayal of claustrophobic and threatening German cityscapes further illustrates the complexity of Lessing's relationship with his Heimat. The overall result is a Heimat image in *Mein Leben im Versteck* which is conflicted.

Lessing tells the story of his childhood and young adulthood, emphasising a familial sense of identity; he represents his Sinti identity within the larger context of Romani identity, which for him is tied to the freedom of the outdoors and highlights the specific connection with the German landscape. In his narrative, Lessing reflects on the enforced journey away from Germany and his resulting difficult relationship with Germany as Heimat:

mit Wehmut erinnerte ich mich an die schöne Landschaft, die mir so sehr am Herzen lag. In so vielen Städten war ich zu Hause, durch so viele Gegenden war ich mittlerweile gekommen, die mir doch meist fremd geblieben waren. Nur die Furcht vor Verfolgung und Deportation hatte mich den kühnen Plan in die Tat umsetzen lassen, zur Wehrmacht zu gehen und anschließend in ein fremdes Land zu desertieren (*Versteck*, p. 107).

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<sup>11</sup>LaCapra, p. 22.

In this passage, he emphasises that he feels at home in many towns and cities in Germany; this level of comfort originates in his early childhood travelling with his parents and also in his time travelling Germany with the jazz band. His associations of family and friends and the memories he has of them in this particular place become so strong that, although the ultimate goal is to leave Germany and rejoin his band in America, his relationship with his homeland reveals itself to be more complex; it is not a place he can bid farewell to very easily. When he returns to Germany after being discovered in Russia, Lessing describes his feelings as he looks out the train window at the German landscape:

Die ganze Zeit, die ich weit weg von meiner angestammten Umgebung verbracht hatte, hatte ich Heimweh empfunden. Mit schmerzlichen Gefühlen dachte ich immer an das Land, in dem ich geboren und aufgewachsen war. Dort hatte ich gelebt, gelitten und auch glückliche Stunden verbracht. Mit meinen Eltern, Verwandten und Freunden (*Versteck*, p. 106).

This strong association between his family and his childhood underlines Lessing's identification of Heimat as a 'Kindheits- und Jugendland' with the primary bond being to his family and ancestry.<sup>12</sup> It brings home forcefully how complex Heimat is for him; in these memories of 'home', Romani and German elements are inseparable from each other.

The longing for family and friends and familiar surroundings is one which can be said to be a universal quality of Heimat and one which Améry refers to as 'traditionelle Heimweh'.<sup>13</sup> Améry describes this state as the longing for home, the singing of *Heimatlieder* in dialect, and the telling of stories of the native mountains and rivers as a comforting sort of self-pity.<sup>14</sup> Lessing describes *Heimweh* in the above passage as 'ein schmerzliche[s] Gefühl', making the reader aware of the pain of Heimat being composed of both German and Romani elements and the longing for the secure space to express the duality of this identity. Améry writes that the problem with this traditional view of Heimat was 'wir mußten mimen, was wir doch waren, aber zu sein das Recht nicht hatten'.<sup>15</sup> This indulgence in the songs and ways of home takes on a bitter quality for the excluded or persecuted in that they had to long for who they were and the place they identified with but did not have the right to do so. This complex is brought home painfully by Lessing's position in the above passage; he is separated from the German landscape by the train window. While he is moving through the country, he experiences a profound sense of being completely disembodied from it: 'dort'. In this excerpt, proximity serves only to underline his extreme estrangement from a place which might have been his 'Heimat', but has now become an alien place. And yet, his connection with Germany is the Romani cultural identity he learned and grew up with in that country, so his sense of estrangement is also

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<sup>12</sup>Améry, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 87. See also Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the Idea of Homeland*, (Rochester: Camden House, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup>Améry, p. 87. 'Das traditionelle Heimweh war für uns - und ist für jedermann, der sich's darin traurig wohl sein läßt - trostendes Selbstmitleid'.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



informed by a memory of the familiar, a sense of longing and *Heimweh*.

The association between nature, his Romani identity (family and childhood memories), and a positive image of Germany as *Heimat* comes up again when, on one of his walks near Lemberg in Russia, he encounters a Romani family camped out in the fields:

Freudig blieb ich stehen, denn schon seit langer Zeit hatte ich keine Roma oder Sinti mehr gesehen. Unversehens eilten meine Gedanken zurück in die Vergangenheit. Ich sah meine Verwandten am Lagerfeuer sitzen und meine Mutter Kali mit den Töpfen hantieren. Eine herrliche Zeit! Wie von einer fremden Kraft angezogen, mußte ich auf das Lager zugehen (*Versteck*, p. 91).

The sight of another Romani family camped out in the woods, even in this unfamiliar landscape, evokes memories of his own family. Lessing binds these two memories together — the joy in seeing a familiar setting in the unfamiliar woods of Russia and his conflation of this scene with memories of his mother, Kali, cooking at the fire in a German landscape of the past. However, even if the German natural landscape is positively connoted by association here, he makes clear a distinction between the land and the people when he tells his new friends about Germany:

Das Land dort ist herrlich und die großen Wälder, Flüsse und Seen sind wunderschön.... Die Seen und Flüsse sind voller Fische, die Wälder voller Wild. Alles ist dort gut, nur die Menschen nicht. Sie sind böse und schlecht. Meinen Vater haben sie dort umgebracht, als ich noch ein kleiner Junge war. Meine Mutter zog sich eine schwere Krankheit zu, an der sie starb. Mich jagen sie wie ein Tier (*Versteck*, p. 94).

Lessing describes the landscape of Germany as one of beauty and with plenty to offer, but this praise does not extend to the German people. His assertion that the people are ‘böse und schlecht’ is damning and calls to mind Jean Améry’s concept of resentment as something that ‘nails someone to the cross of their own past’.<sup>16</sup> This expression of ‘Ressentiment’ — voicing the ongoing danger that the country of Germany represents for victim survivors — is carefully crafted; it is presented as dialogue, as a warning to others, something that was a real danger at the time and that continues to be a threat in the present. In this passage he also makes a clear distinction between himself and the people who live in Germany, emphasising his mother and father and himself as victims of the non-Romani population (*Versteck*, p. 94).

Lessing’s realisation of home and the natural landscape of Germany is not always idyllic, however; throughout *Mein Leben im Versteck*, he reveals his awareness of the insecure space he occupies in his homeland. On the train journey back to Germany from Russia, he describes Germany’s natural beauty with awe and nostalgia: ‘Ich sah über die verzerrte und verschwommene Landschaft. Wälder, riesige Wälder, konnte ich trotz der rasenden Fahrt erkennen. Sie erinnerten mich wieder an meine Kindheit’ (*Versteck*, p. 107). In this passage, he marks his relationship with the German landscape as Romani by remembering his childhood with his parents

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<sup>16</sup>Améry, p. 110.

in nature. He expresses nostalgia in this longing for the past and goes on to write about the possibility of escaping into this landscape — he feels an impulse to jump out of the train and escape into the forest that felt like home. However, he goes on to say ‘aber es lag auch etwas Drohendes über dieser weiten Landschaft. Ich spürte ein warnendes Gefühl in mir’ (*Versteck*, p. 107). The feeling of threat from the landscape in this passage indicates that Lessing’s relationship with his homeland is not as unproblematic as his description of the landscape. The feelings of longing and fear he describes in relation to Germany’s landscape here are indicative of what Améry terms ‘das echte Heimweh’: ‘Das echte Heimweh war nicht Selbstmitleid, sondern Selbstzerstörung. Es bestand in der stückweisen Demontierung unserer Vergangenheit, was nicht abgehen konnte ohne Selbstverachtung und Haß gegen das verlorene Ich’.<sup>17</sup> The destruction of Lessing’s past and the concealment of his identity result in the ‘verlorene Ich’ to which Améry refers.

In this text, Lessing’s struggle with his feelings about his Heimat are evident in his conflicting depictions of the romantic landscape on the one hand and its threatening atmosphere on the other, as well as his desire to leave and his desire to return there. Once again a sense of alienating distance and a sense of tangible proximity combine to produce a conflicted image of Heimat. Associated with Germany’s landscape is also the realisation that his identity must remain hidden in this homeland, and that his right to call it home and his feelings of traditional *Heimweh* are compromised by the threat Germany poses to his identity. The paradox of German-Romani identity is revealed in his statement: ‘Deutschland war für mich immer die Heimat, bedeutete aber auch wieder Angst’ (*Versteck*, p. 106). Throughout the text Lessing’s representation of the German Heimat struggles with the duality of his identity. Even after the war is over, he tells the American occupying forces that he would like to rejoin Dorsten’s band in America and is disappointed when this proves to be impossible. The loss of Heimat and the *Hauptweh* associated with it through Lessing’s loss of identity is the trauma he deals with in this text.

Lessing’s awareness of the threatening environment of his Heimat is heightened in his representations of German cityscapes. He portrays the oppressive atmosphere of the city he is staying in and the people and soldiers who pose such a danger to him there. He seems to make a distinction between the city and the rural milieu in his characterisation of Germany as a ‘Gefängnis’, symbolically one which reflects the paradox of his identity as a German-Romani. He illustrates this in the transformation of the trap in which he feels caught in the following passage:

Uniformen beherrschten das Stadtbild. Ich rannte die Straße hinunter. Planlos zog ich durch die ganze Stadt, bis die Häuserreihen weniger wurden. Am Stadtrand gab es bunte Wiesen. Die Sicht wurde hier nicht von Wohngebäuden, Garagen und Fabriken eingeengt. Hier, zwischen Stadt und Land, betrachtete ich verträumt die

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<sup>17</sup>Améry, p. 88.

Natur (*Versteck*, p. 55).

This may seem like a clichéd portrayal of the clarity and purity that nature can offer in contrast to the built up city of confusion and claustrophobia, but in the context of the Romani history related to the land and the traditions based on this relationship with the natural world, it takes on another level. In contrast to his portrayal of the imprisoning quality of the city, where the houses and uniforms have become oppressive and harmful to him, his representation of nature brings with it colour, space and peace and the more idyllic memories of his childhood and family. 'Ich mußte zurückdenken an die Zeit, als ich mit meinen Eltern, später mit Verwandten, im Planwagen durch Deutschland gezogen war', he writes. 'Frei waren wir und konnten gehen, wohin wir wollten' (*Versteck*, p. 55).

The oppressive atmosphere of the city and of Germany are portrayed as particularly acute when he is left behind by Jimmy Dorsten's band; on his own for the first time, Lessing is at a loss as to what he should do and expresses fear at the idea of staying in Germany without the protection of his role as a musician in the band. He writes that 'irgendwie, ohne genaues zu wissen, hoffte ich ja doch, rauszukommen, raus aus Nazi-Deutschland, raus aus einem Land, das für mich und meine Verwandten, für Roma und Juden zu einem Gefängnis geworden war' (*Versteck*, p. 54). His idea of 'Gefängnis Deutschland' carries with it the idea of Germany as a 'Täterland' and speaks to the part of Lessing's life which is subject to persecution as he and others struggle to maintain their Romani cultural identity in their home countries. Lessing's complex relationship with the German urban and natural landscapes mirrors his problematic relationship with his identity as a German-Romani. While the city is associated with the motif of 'prison Germany', land and nature are the primary images used when Lessing speaks of his past or when he associates himself with his relatives and with his Romani heritage. However, as I have shown, his nature-image is not free of alienating and threatening associations; the train journey scene drives this home in the way it depicts the passing landscape almost as another world, from which the persecuted, Lessing, is shut out. In the end, this sense of alienation seems to win the upper hand in the tumult of emotion he feels at the sight of his Heimat: as much as he may yearn for it, he is not willing to jump out into it, a sign of acknowledgement that for now this cannot be his Heimat in the traditional sense.

This complex casts in an interesting light the more universal concept of nature we encounter in his memories of his idyllic stay with the Herzog family in Russia. It is as if nature in a territory other than Germany can be raised to a universal signifier of 'Heimat'. These depictions of nature he relates to comfort, freedom, peace:

oft gingen wir auf einen nahen Berg, dessen Hänge parkähnlich angelegt waren. Hier konnte man auf schön geschwungenen Wegen herrlich spazierengehen und von den Banken einen phantastischen Blick auf die Stadt genießen. Eine Idylle inmitten von Krieg und Leid (*Versteck*, p. 90).

Within this idyllic natural setting he remembers or imagines his early years with his parents, yet the extent to which nature, in these memories, has replaced a specifically German sense of Heimat, must be questioned.

#### 4.2.3 Conflicting Identities and Landscape

Throughout this text, Lessing's relationship with music is a constant presence as his livelihood and as his comfort - his identity as a musician is one that remains free to express. He first evades being deported through his role as a member in a jazz band. However, when the other members of the band leave for America, Lessing decides to look for some way of leaving Germany so that he can follow them there in order to continue his life as a musician. This resolve marks the beginning of his strategic avoidance of the concentration camps. Throughout the text, music provides an emotional escape for him as well as a practical escape. Beate Eder identifies this strong connection with music as a theme of Romani literature. She asserts that this theme manifests itself in four important ways which often are intertwined. She defines the function of music in these texts as a way of expressing feelings and atmosphere or mood, music in the concentration camps, music as a way of earning money, and the loss of music.<sup>18</sup>

Lessing's text illustrates his relationship with music in all aspects mentioned by Eder. When he remembers meeting the Romani group camped in the forests near where he is staying in Russia, he emphasises the immediate connection he feels with them when he picks up a guitar and starts to play along; he identifies playing music with them as a way of communicating. 'Das Eis zwischen mir und den Sippenmitgliedern war endgültig gebrochen. Stunde um Stunde "redeten" wir miteinander. Sie wollten wissen, wie es in Deutschland zugeht und ob dort viel Musik gemacht würde' (*Versteck*, p. 95). Here, Lessing uses music to show his connection with other Romanies. This assertion of cultural identity through a shared bond with music and the idea of communicating around the fire through stories and through music underlines his Romani identity as something unique that is not necessarily bound to the geographical location of Germany. The handiness of his musical talents also serve as a way of helping him to escape difficult situations. The universal quality of music helps him to communicate with and earn respect from the Russian soldiers who capture and question him; he tells them he used to play professionally with Jimmy Dorsten's jazz band. Because they are curious to know how he plays, they bring him a guitar.

Ich versuchte alle meine Gefühle, die mir bewegten, in die Melodien zu legen. Den Triumph, entkommen zu sein, und das Glück, mein Leben hoffentlich neu gestalten zu können. Ich glaube, ich spielte wie ein junger Gott. Ich ließ die Gitarre weinen, schluchzen und jubeln. Alles, was in meinem Herzen war, legte ich in die Musik (*Versteck*, p. 75).

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<sup>18</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 145.

In this passage, Lessing describes his reunion with the guitar in emotional terms, emphasising this bond and identity of his as a source of comfort. As well as an immense pride in his talents, this passage reveals his desire to convey music as a mode of expression and of connection. The music reveals his emotional state, and it is also a talent which can bring him success in what he aims to do (in this case to be respected by the Russian soldiers, and to achieve safety).

A striking scene that Lessing describes is his trip to Buchenwald concentration camp with colleagues in the NS organisation 'Kraft durch Freude' (KdF). He is given a job as a musician with KdF through a contact made during his time travelling with the jazz band. Gertrud was a good friend of Jimmy Dorsten's and organised performances for the band in Berlin. Dorsten told her to help Lessing in any way she could, if he needed it. Thus, when Lessing returns to Germany he contacts her and she helps secure him an ID for the Reichskulturkammer. He writes of the risk she took in order to help him with those documents and the heavy punishment she would have faced had she been caught: 'Trotz der Gefahr hatte sie mir das Dokument besorgt. Mein Gott, was war ich ihr dankbar. Jetzt gehörte ich, ein Sinto, also offiziell zur Reichskulturkammer des Deutschen Reichs' (*Versteck*, p. 119). This balancing act between identities, that is his innovation in using his German identity through knowledge of German language and culture, allows him to use his musical talents in order to evade the camps, but places him in a position of perpetual fear with no bond to his Romani identity or any Romani family and peers. In Franz's and Stojka's narratives, the proximity of family members is revealed as a comforting, though heartbreaking, part of life in the camps. Lessing writes of his isolation during that time, saying 'Ich hatte wenig privaten Kontakt zu meinen Kollegen oder andere Freunde sowie keinerlei Verbindung mehr zu anderen Sinti' (*Versteck*, p. 121).

Lessing's distance from the experience of other Romanies is further illustrated when one day in 1944 it is announced that the KdF will be performing in Buchenwald. He sets the stage for this memory in the text by providing historical details about Himmler's 'Auschwitz-Erlass' of December 1942 where the persecution and deportation of Romanies was officially decreed. He goes on to describe when and how the deportations took place and the medical experiments and forced sterilisation to which Romani families were subjected (*Versteck*, p. 121).<sup>19</sup> He describes his reaction to the news that he will have to perform at Buchenwald as extreme fear: 'Mir lief ein Schauer den Rücken herunter. Ich wußte, daß es dort ein Konzentrationslager gab. Ich konnte jetzt aber auch nicht sagen: 'Nein, ich will nicht mit, ich gehe da nicht hin' (*Versteck*, p. 121). In *Mein Leben im Versteck*, he attempts to convey the fear and revulsion he feels at having to go to the concentration camp, and it is clear that he wants the reader to understand that he had no other option.

He expresses anxiety that the guards at Buchenwald will be able to identify him as Romani

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<sup>19</sup>Lessing's frequent incorporation of historical information into the telling of his story will be discussed further in Section 3.3, 'Genre'.

and remembers cowering in the seat so that nobody would be able to get a good look at him.

Ich konnte doch nicht in einem Konzentrationslager Musik machen. Ich konnte doch nicht die Folterknechte unterhalten, während im gleichen Lager Sinti, Juden, Roma und andere gequält und mißhandelt wurden. Andererseits konnte ich jetzt nicht einfach aussteigen und mich abmelden. Das würde doch nur noch mehr auf mich aufmerksam machen (*Versteck*, p. 122).

What Lessing describes here is very different from the moments of connection with Germans who want to help them or who offer kindness that Franz and Stojka describe in their texts. Lessing is using his connection — music — with KdF in order to survive. Experiencing the Third Reich alongside the perpetrators puts him in an extremely uncomfortable position. Throughout this entire scene, he portrays himself as physically and emotionally uncomfortable and highlights the dangerous position he is in — squirming in his seat and constantly saying he cannot imagine doing the task that he is being forced to do. Throughout the narrative, he reminds us that he had no choice. Even in his actions during the trip, he makes sure that it is clear that he is following orders. He writes:

Der Musikgruppenleiter machte uns eindringlich darauf aufmerksam, daß wir die Rolläden, die an den Fenstern unseres Busses angebracht waren, herunterlassen sollten. Ich zog die morsche Stoffbahn nach unten und befestigte sie mit der Schnur an einem kleinen Knopf am unteren Teil des Fensterrahmens. Jetzt konnten wir nur noch durch die Frontscheibe etwas von dem schrecklichen Ort wahrnehmen (*Versteck*, p. 122).

His detailed description of himself closing the shade and his admission to blocking out the view of the atrocities which confront him is presented with the justification that he was commanded to look away. The leader of the group told them to shut out those scenes, and he did not want to stand out in order to avoid persecution.

He relays the whole visit in his text, saying that they were only allowed to stay on the stage and that they did not see anything of the prisoners. They were invited to a dinner with the prison guards and Lessing describes the event as seemingly endless, emphasising when ‘der schreckliche Besuch doch ein Ende zu nehmen [schien]’ (*Versteck*, p. 123). This brief visit to the concentration camp is the only time where he is inside a camp; while there, he does not see the horrors that the prisoners experienced there. The paradox of being German, Romani and a musician is very apparent in this scene, with the conflict of loyalties and identifications working against each other in his writing. He closes the scene reflecting on what he saw: ‘Auf der Fahrt gingen mir die Gedanken an den schauerlichen Ort Buchenwald nicht aus dem Kopf. Ungeheuerlich, daß wir vor den Schergen spielen mußten’ (*Versteck*, p. 123). With this statement, he points out the grotesque nature of the act of playing music there and of his involvement in that act; he also makes it clear, and arguably excuses the action, with language emphasising that he was forced to do it — ‘spielen mußten’. He next takes the reader to Dresden, where

the music group was based. In Dresden, Lessing experiences the allied bombing of the city and his representation of these scenes foregrounds the question of the moments of connection discussed earlier with reference to Franz and Ceija Stojka. Rosenhaft articulates the problem accurately when she raises ‘the question of whom the Sinti should identify with: victims or perpetrators, Germans or others? Who after all, is the enemy and who the ally? Much survivor testimony is in fact punctuated with accounts of being helped by individual German Gadge’.<sup>20</sup>

Lessing expresses his connection to German *Gadge* in his description of the allied bombing of Dresden. He does not witness the horrors of the camps; the devastation that he experiences firsthand and describes in this text is the bombing of Dresden. He is sent to prison in Dresden after his landlady accuses him of stealing; during his incarceration, the city is bombed. Lessing describes it as “Bombenteppiche [...] auf die herrliche Stadt, Feuerstürme vernichteten den Rest” (*Versteck*, p. 129). Three pages of Lessing’s text are devoted to a description of this event, the terror he felt and the destruction of the city and its people.

Aus den Häuserskeletten stiegen noch die Qualmsäulen der Feuerbrunst in den Himmel. An einigen Stellen war statt des Hauses nur noch ein Steinhaufen zu sehen. Tod und Zerstörung überall. Links und rechts der Straße lagen Tote, so viele Tote, wie ich in meinem ganzen Leben noch nicht gesehen hatte. Die Körper waren teils verkohlt, viele Menschen, die im Bombenhagel und der anschließenden Feuerbrunst ihr Leben gelassen hatten, waren durch die enorme Hitze geschrumpft. Ich konnte den Anblick der Leichen kaum ertragen. Mir wurde schlecht. Tränen schossen mir in die Augen, als ich weiterlief durch diese Straße des Grauens. Ich rannte jetzt ziellos umher und war auf der Suche nach Freunden und Bekannten (*Versteck*, p. 131).

The graphic images of death and suffering depicted in this scene with corpses lining the streets is one of the only scenes of violence in the book; he says himself that the number of corpses he sees overwhelms him. What is striking is that the scene he describes is of German suffering. While he did not experience the atrocities of the concentration camps first-hand, he could have imagined or reconstructed the experiences of the Romani victims in his text, as many others have done in reference to the Jewish Holocaust. However, he relies on the factual documentation that he has found in archives to portray the victimisation of the Romanies in the Holocaust and does not try to imagine the Romani Holocaust experience within the camps. In avoiding the camps, he is exposed to the area bombings as a member of the German public; here, he witnesses the destruction of lives around him and of Germany. This text, which aims to bring to light the persecution of the Romanies, shows in great detail the suffering of others besides Romanies, in particular the perpetrators.

It strikes me that this text is a very personal account which illustrates the tug of war between the ways in which Lessing identifies himself as a German Romani and as a victim of Nazi persecution who, however, has a complex relationship with this experience (because he did not ex-

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<sup>20</sup>Rosenhaft, ‘The Gypsy’s Revenge’, p. 411.

perience the camps first-hand). Evident in the language of his narrative is the guilty conscience of the survivor. He does not mention surviving family members and what their experiences of the Third Reich entailed; the uncles he speaks about at the beginning of the narrative are not mentioned again. He finishes his book by describing the lack of official recognition Sinti received as victims of the Holocaust and tells of his attempts to obtain 'Wiedergutmachung' and recognition as a 'rassisch Verfolgter' after he re-starts his music career (*Versteck*, pp. 143-152). However, his account of pursuing these issues again relies heavily on historical facts, which creates a sense of distance from the actual experience. He writes:

Im Gegensatz zur Entschädigungs- und Wiedergutmachungspolitik gegenüber den Juden gerieten Roma und Sinti nach dem Krieg fast wieder in Vergessenheit. Ja, es war häufig so, daß Diskriminierungen fortgesetzt wurden. Von keiner Seite, weder im In- noch im Ausland erhielten die Sinti eine echte Unterstützung. [...] Für einige Sinti, die sich um Wiedergutmachung bemühten, wurde die Antragstellung und das jahrelange Verfahren zu einem regelrechten Spießrutenlauf (*Versteck*, pp. 143-144).

His account of survival and of avoiding the worst fate associated with the persecution he faced is indeed an individual one and one that is important for its differences to texts by Philomena Franz and Karl and Ceija Stojka.

The continuous fear of deportation to the camps, the murder of his father in 1925, and the loss of his sense of security and identity were the traumas Lessing faced and which he documents in this book. The murder of his father functions as a fatal foreshadowing of the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust and thereby becomes a kind of *Ersatz* for the trauma he strategically avoided. This substitution of a personal trauma for a historical trauma allows his experiences to be included in the Romani collective memory. His father had been vulnerable as a Romani in German society and his murder connects Lessing to the persecution and murder of so many other Romanies in the Third Reich. The murder of his father and his knowledge of the vulnerable position Romanies occupied in Germany forces him to live in fear. 'Meine deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit hat mich nicht davor bewahrt, jahrelang Angst haben zu müssen, in Verstecken zu leben und auf der Flucht zu sein', he writes. 'Nur weil ich ein Sinto bin, lief ich Gefahr, ins Konzentrationslager gebracht zu werden. Glück, ein wenig Mut, Freunde und die Umstände haben mich vor dem Schlimmsten bewahrt. Die Angst ist geblieben' (*Versteck*, p. 15). Here, he describes the fear as something that has stayed with him: the insecurity of the Romani identity within Germany, a landscape that could not protect him.

#### 4.2.4 Genre

Lessing admits to hesitating for years before writing and remembers questioning the necessity of writing down his experiences of surviving the Third Reich. Being over 70 and in poor health, he felt obligated to record his memories of what he had gone through: 'In unserer politisch und



wirtschaftlich schwierigen Zeit halte ich es wieder für nötig, auf die schreckliche Geschichte von Verfolgung und Deportation einer Minderheit aufmerksam zu machen. Es soll nicht wieder geschehen, was schon einmal möglich war' (*Versteck*, p. 14). This statement clearly indicates Lessing's political intention in writing to create awareness of the Romani Holocaust experience. In particular, he makes references in his preface and devotes the last chapter of his book to the difficult fight Romanies faced to obtain 'die symbolische Zahlung im Rahmen der Wiedergutmachung' (*Versteck*, p. 143); in most cases this was never paid.<sup>21</sup> Referring to the continuing injustices towards Romanies in Germany after the end of WWII, Sybil Milton raises the point that 'Nazi pejorative attacks against the Gypsies as "asocial and criminal" were seldom perceived as unambiguously racist. This language has reinforced existing anti-Gypsy stereotypes'.<sup>22</sup> This failure to recognise the 'asocial and criminal' Nazi labels as racist was a factor in the prolonged silence surrounding Romani victimisation in the Holocaust that Lessing hopes to break. In this context, it is interesting to note that many Romanies faced difficulties obtaining official papers and passports again after the end of the war, even though many of these originals were still located in local police files.<sup>23</sup> This denial of citizenship restricted the traveling lifestyle and also undermined the feeling of security that Romanies could expect in their homelands.

Henry Greenspan highlights the importance of listening to survivors and to what their testimony or ways of presenting testimony have to tell the reader:

It takes time to get to know recounters, not as abstract 'witnesses', but as particular people who bring to retelling their specific concerns, identities and styles [...] It also takes time to discover one's role as a listener, both in its particularity and as survivors have come to anticipate listeners' expectations in general.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear from Lessing's missive 'An den Leser' that he wants his readers to know him as a Romani person and aims in this way to combat the abstract image of the stereotypical criminal or romantic *Zigeuner*. He clearly sets out his agenda for this text here, illustrating his intentions and setting out his own 'autobiographical pact'.<sup>25</sup> As previously discussed, Lessing is concerned with representing the complexity of German-Romani identity in his text and uses a storytelling style, incorporating dialogue and anecdotes within his narrative that draw the reader into the experiences he is remembering. His distance from his experiences and the ability to tell of his time in the Third Reich are given in detail at the beginning of his text. The dedication page of this book opens with 'Dieses Buch ist ein authentischer Rückblick auf die entscheiden-

<sup>21</sup>Milton, 'Persecuting the Survivors', pp. 38-40.

<sup>22</sup>Sybil Milton, 'Gypsies and the Holocaust' *The History Teacher*, 24 4 (1991), 375-387. Here p. 377. Hereafter cited as 'Gypsies and the Holocaust'.

<sup>23</sup>Milton, 'Persecuting the Survivors', p. 39.

<sup>24</sup>Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (Westport, Ct: Praeger, 1998), pp.169-170.

<sup>25</sup>Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Pact', in *On Autobiography*, ed. by Paul John Eakin and trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1985), pp. 3-30.

den Jahre meines Lebens. Ich habe mich bemüht, alle Erlebnisse und Ereignisse so originalgetreu wie möglich wiederzugeben und hoffe, daß mir dies auf anschauliche Weise gelungen ist'. He goes on to admit the vulnerability of memory, pointing out that he, as the writer, stands fifty years away from these experiences: 'Dies gilt besonders für meine Kindheits- und Jugenderinnerungen, die schon weit mehr als 50 Jahre zurückliegen und die ich nur noch aus dem Gedächtnis und den wenigen mir zur Verfügung stehenden Unterlagen rekonstruieren konnte'.<sup>26</sup> He acknowledges that he is reflecting on experiences that happened many years ago; reliability in these memories is addressed in this opening statement.

In contrast to Franz's *Zwischen Liebe und Hass*, the structure of the narrative does not begin with a section describing what was lost. Lessing begins by revealing himself to the reader as someone who is living in a position of poverty and constant fear. The picture of what was lost, the 'Märchenwelt', is portrayed through the story his uncle tells him about the death of his father. However, in the opening section of Lessing's narrative, entitled 'Kindheit in Herford', he describes a life of poverty and fear. He writes that

auch bei uns zu Hause war Mitte der dreißiger Jahre die Angst vor Verfolgung spürbar. Mutter berichtete immer wieder davon, dass alle Sinti in Konzentrationslager kommen sollten. In den Straßen und Gassen unseres Viertels wurde erzählt, daß schon viele Sinti-Familien deportiert worden waren. Angst breitete sich aus (*Versteck*, p. 30).

However, Lessing is very much at the center of this narrative and is a protagonist who faces troubles and triumphs along his journey of escape. He is at times arrogant about his musical talent and knows how to move the narrative around his experiences, highlighting the moments of action and introspection, allowing the reader to become acquainted with the character represented in this text. The narrative of a journey provides a clear structure for his work. Reiter recognises the form of the tale of the journey in recording memories of the Holocaust: 'Die archetypische Situation der Reise erlaubt eine Organisation von Erinnerung, sowohl in formaler als auch in inhaltlicher Hinsicht' (*Versteck*, p. 86).

Lessing does emphasise that he is telling a story through his text and his style reveals this through the amount of polished dialogue and the juxtaposition of personal memory and historical research in his text. He has done a lot of research into the background of his experiences and what Sinti and Roma went through in Germany at that time. He includes this in the form of didactic historical passages within his story. For example, he writes:

In Deutschland hatte sich das politische Klima seit der Machtübernahme der Nationalsozialisten verschärft. Ich spürte, daß sich etwas verändert hatte, auch wenn ich nicht genau wußte, was bereits alles geschehen war. Mir war damals nicht klar, wie schnell die Hitler-Regierung daran ging, Deutschland umzugestalten und Juden, Roma und Sinti und viele andere zu unterdrücken (*Versteck*, p. 27).

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<sup>26</sup>See *Versteck*, dedication page.

Lessing then goes on to provide four pages of historical information detailing the Nuremberg race laws complete with quotations from these laws. He does this in order to provide didactic information to the reader and to include Sinti and Roma within the history of the Holocaust. For example, he writes:

Die Nürnberger Rassegesetze machten Juden, aber auch Roma und Sinti, zu Menschen zweiter Klasse. In späteren juristischen Kommentaren hieß es: 'In Europa sind regelmäßig nur Juden und Zigeuner artfremden Blutes'. Juden, Roma und Sinti wurden aufgrund rassistischer Gründe ausgegrenzt und verfolgt (*Versteck*, p. 27).

Here Lessing includes Sinti and Roma as being persecuted on racial grounds. This assertion was (and still is) heavily disputed by historians at the time that he wrote this.<sup>27</sup> It seems evident in his text that he is deliberately addressing these concerns and including the persecution of Sinti and Roma at the same level as the persecution of Jews for this reason.

The shift between these historical narratives mixed with documentary evidence and his own personal narration of his story is often jarring. It lends Lessing's story something of the factual as well as points quite obviously to the fact that this narrative is constructed to fit his purposes and intentions for writing. Therefore it produces a blend of autobiographical experience and historical information chosen to elaborate and to embellish his own memory of the time. His research into the documents which issued the laws to persecute Romanies is research into his own persecution which led to his fear. He places himself within that historical context, finding out what could have happened to him and did happen to others, emphasising that his identity was taken away by these crimes and he is reclaiming it in this text by bringing his story out into the public sphere. He places himself and his personal experiences within the wider context of the history of the Holocaust, mixing or borrowing from genres to make sure the reader is made to understand what happened to those Sinti and Roma unable to escape or avoid the camps because of family ties or lack of musical talent. In this way, Lessing constructs a personal narrative with documentary evidence to fill the gaps not only of memory, but of experience.

When Lessing wrote *Mein Leben im Versteck* in 1993, the only Romani narratives published in Germany were Holocaust autobiographies and there were very few of these. The shared victimisation in the Holocaust provided a platform for the Romani rights movement to work from, in that Romanies could publicise their experiences without breaking any taboos and knowing how they would be received by the German public. There was safety in the victim status. The documentation of the crimes against Romanies provides Lessing with the justification and affirmation for writing these memories down without the fear of being persecuted for this act. That Romanies are now placing themselves within a historical context is relatively new; Lessing's use of the medium of the *Gadje*, the written documentation that is needed in order to 'prove' experience, is a sign that he too is inscribing his personal stories within the

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<sup>27</sup>Milton, 'Gypsies and the Holocaust', pp. 375-377. See also Lewy, pp. 321-325.

broader history of Germany during WWII. There has not long been a written history of Romani identity based on a culture of shared practices, beliefs and oral tradition.<sup>28</sup> In Lessing's text, however, there is a sense that writing only of himself and his escape from incarceration in the concentration camps would not be enough to justify his writing and that he needed to include the Romani experience of the Holocaust in his text.

His text is introduced through a foreword written by Günter Walraff, a writer from Cologne, who provides confirmation of the historical information that Lessing will later include interspersed within his memories. Walraff mentions the Nuremberg laws, also saying they were applied to Sinti and Roma and other groups and therefore corroborates what Lessing later writes about. Also, indicating the political intention of Lessing's text, Walraff heads his foreword with a quotation from Romani Rose, described here as the 'Sprecher der Sinti und Roma'. Rose has long been one of the driving forces behind the Romani movement and especially the movement for recognition as victims in the Holocaust.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to consider the possibility that Walraff also offers a sort of literary confirmation of Lessing's text. Walraff's contribution to the book and Lessing's mention of him in his dedication suggests support for his work by a well-known author and offers confirmation of Lessing's work as a literary work. Lessing writes in his dedication: 'Mein Dank gilt außerdem dem Kölner Schriftsteller Günter Walraff, der mich immer wieder ermutigt hat, meine Lebensgeschichte trotz meines hohen Alters aufzuschreiben'.

Laura Marcus warns that 'we need to remember that the desire to keep fact and fiction separate has often stemmed from the ideological demand that history should not be contaminated by fictional productions'.<sup>30</sup> Lessing's text does provide a lot of historical information blended within the story of his life and it seems apparent that ultimately he is trying to provide information with the intention of bettering the image of Romanies in Germany, but he is doing so by writing it in the form of a narrative or story. The story format itself is also important and reveals something important about the author who is remembering. James Young's comment that a narrative can show something of the act of writing and why it is significant to the author beyond as a means of conveying facts is, I think, the more interesting aspect of the narrative.<sup>31</sup> Like Franz and Ceija Stojka, Lessing is committing a bold act in putting his experiences down on paper and making them into a coherent narrative that addresses the intentions he set out for his text. The historical documentation distracts from the subjective quality of his experience and suggests the caution that also was noted in Franz's and Ceija Stojka's work. He employs dialogue which in its immediacy carries the narrative urgency of the story he is relating. He makes the character of the *Kompaniechef* who discovers that he is a Sinto particularly 'evil'

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<sup>28</sup>Kapralski, p. 219.

<sup>29</sup>See the Introduction of this thesis, p. 27.

<sup>30</sup>Marcus, p. 258.

<sup>31</sup>Young, p. 37

through the use of dialogue:

‘Hab ich’s doch gewußt, daß mit Ihnen etwas nicht in Ordnung ist. Ich wußte bislang nur nicht, was. Jetzt, nachdem wir Sie überprüft haben und den Bericht vorliegen haben, wissen wir, daß Sie ein Zigeuner sind. Ich werde dafür sorgen, daß Sie dahin kommen, wo Sie hingehören, ins KZ. Wache, nehmen Sie den Mann fest’ (*Versteck*, p. 70).

This direct attack on his Romani identity is interesting to note. It is the threat to this identity that seems to be the catalyst for Lessing to write down his experiences after so long. After so many years, it is unlikely that he could remember exactly what this man said, but his insistence on letting the reader hear these voices in the text reveals how they came across to him or perhaps more notably, how he wants the character to come across to the reader. The absolute knowledge that this man would spit out a wish for Lessing to be put in the KZ where he belongs is a damning portrayal. The actual truth of this statement is difficult if not impossible to assess, but what is important in this analysis is what it reveals about Lessing’s representation of his experience.

Lessing uses a substantial amount of dialogue throughout his text as well as other stylistic devices to create suspense for the reader. He makes a plan to escape from jail by loosening a board in the back of the latrines so that he can climb out the back and escape into the woods the next time the guard takes him. Here, Lessing creates a suspenseful narrative of the tricky escape:

Wir verließen den Wachraum und gingen zu den Latrinen. Im Lager war es mittlerweile weitgehend ruhig geworden. Ich spürte deutlich, daß die Wache nur ein paar Schritte hinter mir war [...] Ich mußte mich sputen. Sicherlich entdeckte er jetzt schon das Loch in der Latrinenwand [...] Er riß sein Gewehr an die Wange. Sein Schuß löste Alarm aus. Zum Glück verfehlte die Kugel ihr Ziel und strich weit an mir vorbei. Ich glaube, er hat nur ziellos hinter mir her geschossen (*Versteck*, pp. 71-72).

This again presents a blurring of the boundaries of genre between Lessing’s memories, the historical background he wants to give, and the storytelling qualities in the text which point to the fictionalisation of memory. Again, Lessing shows us that what is important to him in this text is to present himself as a German Romani writer and to lay to rest the stereotype of the ‘criminal Zigeuner’.

### 4.3 Karl Stojka

Karl Stojka was born on April 20, 1931 and died in 2003. His autobiography, *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, was published in Vienna in 1994. He is now a well known and acclaimed artist<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Susan Tebbutt, ‘My Name in the Third Reich was Z: 5742’, pp. 171-175 for a discussion about Karl and Ceija Stojka’s art within the wider context of how Romanies have been perceived in non-Romani artwork and their own self-representations.

and his exhibition catalogues have been published as *Ein Kind in Birkenau* and *Gas*.<sup>33</sup> These both contain prints of his paintings, official documents and family photographs as well as some quotations from Stojka of memories which he also includes in *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*.<sup>34</sup> Stojka emphasises the same hope that other Romani writers such as Franz, Ceija Stojka and Lessing express: that Romanies will be seen as ‘normal people’: ‘In Wahrheit sind wir Menschen wie alle anderen auch, haben Sorgen wie alle anderen Menschen und freuen uns über die gleichen Dinge wie sie’ (*Zuhause*, p. 7).<sup>35</sup> Stojka’s definition of ‘normal people’ in this statement coincides with Lessing’s idea of ‘ganz normale Menschen’ as being people with ‘Gefühlen, Ängsten und Hoffnungen’ (*Versteck*, p. 14) and does not detract from the wish to assert the uniqueness of Romani identity.

Stojka’s narrative begins shortly after he moves to the United States and takes on a unique structure in recalling his memories of the concentration camps by telling them to his new friends there. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on his book *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, where he works through his memories of the Holocaust by narrating his experiences; I will explore his working through of these traumatic memories, his expression of Heimat and his struggle with the loss of Romani identity and Heimat in Austria, taking a comparative approach in referring back to other writers.

#### 4.3.1 Trauma and Identity

Karl Stojka’s narrative differs structurally from the accounts of Franz, Ceija Stojka and Lessing in that he reflects on and tells his memories within the framework of his time in America in the early 1970s. However, the time period that he brings the reader back to also had taken place twenty years before he wrote the book. He connects his memories of the Holocaust to recollections of the different kind of travelling and hardship involved in starting out again in America. In this way, Stojka places himself at a distance from these memories, remembering himself remembering as he recalls events to his neighbours in New Jersey. Throughout his narrative, the reader is repeatedly brought back to 1970s America where he is living through a completely different journey. In *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*, he describes many of the same memories that Ceija Stojka does in her narrative: the arrest of their father and his bones being sent to their mother. Although there are many discrepancies between the siblings’ memories, the factuality of these events is not particularly relevant here, as they are part of each sibling’s

<sup>33</sup>Karl Stojka, *Ein Kind in Birkenau* (Vienna: K. Stojka, 1995) and *Gas* (Vienna: K. Stojka, 1996).

<sup>34</sup>Two especially significant honours for him were: his invitation to light one of the eternal lights at the dedication of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. as a representative for the Romanies in 1993; a year later he was also received by the Pope in order to talk with him about the plight of Romanies in the world (*Zuhause*, p. 112).

<sup>35</sup>Compare with Lessing’s statement ‘Ich will den Lesern zeigen, dass auch die Sinti “ganz normale Menschen” sind. Menschen mit Gefühlen, Ängsten und Hoffnungen’ (*Versteck*, p. 14).

story and memory.<sup>36</sup>

Beate Eder has identified music as a recurring theme in Romani writing.<sup>37</sup> Stojka remembers how the party guests asked him to sing *Zigeunerlieder* and he sang a Russian song he always heard the Russian prisoners singing in Buchenwald. This changes the atmosphere of the party completely: 'Da wurden sie ganz still, die Tränen liefen ihnen die Wangen herunter, und sie brauchten noch eine Flasche Wodka, um darüber hinwegzukommen' (*Zuhause*, p. 32). One of the men there knows that Stojka must have learned that song in the concentration camps and everyone urges him to tell his story. This serves as the device for Stojka to remember the Holocaust in his text and he writes: 'Und alle sagten: "Erzähl, erzähl!"', und ich mußte ihnen die Geschichte erzählen, die Geschichte der kleinen Kinder im großen Lager von Auschwitz' (*Zuhause*, p. 32). Stojka leaves the reader with the image of him telling the story he is about to relate through writing and thereby shows another element of Romani life that is being lost - oral tradition. The image he creates of himself as a storyteller in this text suggests that he is not attempting to recreate the experience in its telling and is not experiencing a 'repetition of trauma' in narrating these memories, rather he is 'working through' these memories in the context of the rest of his life and the loss of Romani identity in Austria, which he wants to fight against.<sup>38</sup> However, the images that he presents to the reader are gruesome and show fewer reservations in admitting the behavior of others and of himself during that time than the work of Franz and Ceija Stojka. The focus of Karl Stojka's narrative is on survival in the midst of horror and destruction.

Like his sister Ceija, Karl Stojka remembers the death of their brother Ossi and their father as the traumatic memories he needs to address, but he focuses on the loss of identity, tradition and continuity which he associates with those memories. Karl and his older brother Mongo Stojka were separated from their mother and sisters after a selection in Auschwitz where males were sent to Buchenwald and females to Ravensbrück. Both Ceija and Karl Stojka remember being too young for the selection, but in order to save them from the gas chambers of Auschwitz their mother told one of the guards that they were midgets and embarrassed about their size (*Zuhause*, 43). Whereas Ceija's description of Ossi's sickness and death was very immediate, with her recalling the conversation they had just before he died, Karl maintains distance from this scene: 'Er hat gewußt, daß er sterben mußte, aber er ist sehr tapfer gewesen' (*Zuhause*, p. 39).<sup>39</sup> As he goes on to describe Ossi's death, he presents the reader with a gruesome image of him looking through a pile of dead bodies behind the *Krankenbaracke* until he finds Ossi 'ganz

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<sup>36</sup>These discrepancies, most notably the authors' memories of their mother's 'bone sachet' (in which she carried a few of their father's bones) and the selection at Auschwitz, are explored by Lorely French in 'Trauma and Gender', pp. 69-78.

<sup>37</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, pp. 145-153.

<sup>38</sup>LaCapra, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup>Compare with Ceija's memory *Verborgenen*, p. 26, where she involves the reader in that memory through her use of dialogue.

klein und bleich, mit einem Lächeln auf den Lippen, gestorben am Flecktyphus' (*Zuhause*, p. 39). This description, along with the telling of how his father was arrested, are where he addresses the loss his family faced. Although he does not spend as much time in his narrative recalling the traumatic loss of his father as his sister does in hers, he does include the memory of his interaction with his father when he visits him in prison. He clings to this memory of saying goodbye to his father: 'Er saß im Besucherzimmer auf der anderen Seite eines Eisengitters, er versuchte, mich durch das Gitter zu küssen, aber es ging nicht, die Eisenstäbe waren zu dick. Dann hat man ihn wieder weggebracht, und ich habe ihn nie wieder gesehen' (*Zuhause*, p. 35).

In addition to working through his traumatic memories of the concentration camps of the Third Reich, Stojka addresses what he sees as another traumatic loss:

was mich am meisten schmerzt, ist, daß ich den Niedergang der Zigeuner in Europa miterleben mußte. Natürlich gibt es noch einige von uns, aber langsam lösen wir uns als Volk auf, was bleibt, sind unsere Kinder, die sich in nichts mehr von den anderen Kindern unterscheiden, sie sprechen gleich, tragen die gleiche Kleidung, aber vielleicht werden sie einmal stolz darauf sein, Zigeuner unter ihren Vorfahren gehabt zu haben (*Zuhause*, p. 115).

He expresses a clear anxiety in this passage and throughout his narrative as to the future of Romanies, their language and culture, all over the world. This nostalgia for times past and an identity which is threatened is one with which he struggles. He regrets in this narrative that he did not teach his children Romani,<sup>40</sup> he embraces modern life and travels far from the familiar routes that his relatives travelled before him, leaving behind the horse and wagon in favor of the car and airplane for his travelling (*Zuhause*, p. 93). Throughout his text, Stojka attempts to deconstruct popular stereotypes of Romanies. Stojka begins his book with a foreword where he lists the stereotypes that Romanies have had to contend with: 'wir seien Diebe, würden Kinder stehlen, seien arbeitsscheu. Aber auch von den Vorurteilen, wir würden frei sein, keine Steuern zahlen, seien immer lustig und spielten die ganze Zeit Zigeunermusik' (*Zuhause*, p. 7).

His text is a journey through the memories of his childhood and his adulthood, making connections between his experiences and seeking to explore his identity as a Romani. He spends nine pages towards the beginning of his narrative (*Zuhause*, pp. 20-28) giving the reader a picture of Romani life from the past by writing that his mother supported the family by telling fortunes and his father was a horse dealer. He establishes the Romani ancestral connection with Austria by saying his family had all of the necessary papers, *Heimatschein* and *Gewerbeschein*, because they had already been resident in Austria for 300 years (*Zuhause*, p. 22). Through highlighting that 'wo immer wir hinkamen, kannten die Roma und Sinti ihre Standplätze seit Jahrhunderten' he further emphasises the space in Austrian landscape, which he feels belongs to Romanies.

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<sup>40</sup>See p. 109. He attributes this mistake to the fact that his wife was not a Romani and it usually is the role of the mother to teach the children the Romani language.



Stojka makes a point of drawing attention to the different gender roles in Romani culture which were also evident in Franz's and Ceija Stojka's work. For example, he writes:

bei den Roma besorgte die Frau das täglich notwendige Geld. Was der Vater mit dem Pferdehandel verdient hat, ist immer auf die Seite gelegt worden, das war ja praktisch sein Geschäftskapital. Die Frauen mußten für die Familie sorgen, sie haben mit Spitzen hausiert, wahrgesagt und Töpfe und Pfannen verkauft, in der Freizeit wurden Körbe geflochten (*Zuhause*, p. 22).

He also presents the notion of 'Ehre' in Romani culture and the concept of contamination, which echoes research by Martins-Heuß and Reemtsma.<sup>41</sup> Again, this sense of honour is strongly tied to gender roles within Romani communities. Stojka writes,

jede Familie hatte ihr eigenes Lagerfeuer, eine Frau durfte nie auf einem fremden Feuer kochen. Wenn das Essen fertig war, hat man einen vollen Teller an die anderen Familien geschickt, das war so üblich. Der Mann hat immer die Hosen angehabt und hatte das Sagen in der Familie. Ein Mann konnte durch eine Frau unrein werden. Wenn er zum Beispiel gegessen ist, und eine Frau ist über seine Füße gestiegen, so war er unrein und wurde für ein paar Tage von den anderen gemieden (*Zuhause*, p. 26).

These strongly defined gender roles can be observed throughout his narrative in his relationships with his first and second wives. In his book Stojka is careful to represent both Romanies and Austrians as complex human beings with emotions. This expresses his desire to have Romanies be regarded in a more favorable way, but also expresses caution in addressing the other part of his identity: that of being Austrian and being associated with the German language.

In Stojka's text, although he does write about the horrors of the concentration camp, there is a narrative distance in the voice he employs to tell the reader these memories which suggests the 'articulatory practice' to which LaCapra refers in his discussion of 'working through' trauma. His description of the horrors of the camps maintains the past tense narrative voice of the adult looking back:

Nach drei oder vier Wochen begann dann das Sterben, die Leute sind umgefallen wie die Fliegen, vor Schwäche und Hunger. Die Toten mußten immer im Hinter-  
raum des Blockführerhauses gestapelt werden, und dann wurden sie zum Krematorium gebracht (*Zuhause*, p. 39).

Though Stojka, like his sister, was a child while going through these experiences, he is able to keep a certain distance from these memories in recalling them and does not immerse the reader in the child's narrative voice; this suggests that he is not reliving the memories through writing. The reader remains conscious of the fact that these memories are being narrated by a man years after their occurrence - in the text his audience is the room full of strangers in New Jersey who want to hear about his experience - and Stojka consciously puts the layers of distance and place between himself and his memories of the Holocaust. However, part of the function of this

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<sup>41</sup>Martins-Heuß, 'Reflections on Collective Identity', pp. 207-210 and Reemtsma, p. 62.

layering of the text and revealing himself as the storyteller is in marking this text with elements of Romani tradition.<sup>42</sup> As Benjamin noted in his essay 'Der Erzähler', the isolation involved in sitting down and writing resulted in a shift away from traditional storytelling and an emphasis on relaying information.<sup>43</sup> Stojka, however, includes himself in this written narrative acting as the Romani storyteller and revealing much about himself as the teller of the story rather than focusing purely on relating information. He does not adopt the child's narrative voice in his storytelling, but refers to himself as a child: 'Buchenwald war die Hölle auf Erden, und um zu überleben, mußte man besonders als Kind böse und brutal werden, denn daß du ein Kind warst, hat dort nichts gezählt' (*Zuhause*, p. 48). In this passage, Stojka, as the teller of this particular story, points out that he was a child at the time he is remembering and he can look back and assess his way of surviving as a child as being brutal, but still ultimately the story of survival.

In considering Reiter's statement which draws a connection between the loss of identity and the loss of language,<sup>44</sup> it is tempting to suggest that Stojka's text, after his long silence, is a way of re-establishing his identity and combating what he said was Hitler's greatest crime against the Romanies — their destruction in the Holocaust and the resulting disruption in tradition and way of life due to the loss of so many lives. In coming out of hiding, like Lessing, Stojka asserts a new kind of Romani identity — that of an activist and a writer. He has established a narrative of his experiences, in German. The fact that these memories are still part of him and his life, despite the fact that 'die Bilder aus meiner Jugend in meinem Kopf verblaßt [sind]' (*Zuhause*, p. 112), is something he makes clear at the end of his narrative. He writes about the experience of playing Sidonie's grandfather in the film *Abschied von Sidonie*<sup>45</sup> and of acting out the scene where Sidonie is deported:

Obwohl ich wußte, daß es nur ein Film war, obwohl man die vielen Zuseher, Kameralleute, Beleuchter und Helfer sehen konnte, verschwanden sie für mich alle, und ich war wieder der kleine Bub, der einen Waggon betritt, der ihn in ein KZ bringen soll. In mir stieg eine Panik auf, die ich gar nicht beschreiben kann und die niemand versteht, der nicht selbst einmal von den Nazis nach Auschwitz gebracht wurde. [...] Dann setzte sich der Zug in Bewegung und rollte langsam davon, und mit jedem Schlagen der Räder auf den Schienen wuchs meine Angst, es wäre wie damals, er würde nicht mehr stehenbleiben und mich wieder nach Auschwitz bringen (*Zuhause*, p. 114).

Though Stojka has suggested throughout the text that these traumatic memories are still very real for him, this is the only moment where Stojka explicitly reveals the panic and trauma of the memories he has recalled. Throughout the text, he has been involved with various moments

<sup>42</sup>See Solms, 'Erzählen als Kunst', pp. 109-126 for a discussion of the significance of 'Erzählen' in Romani culture.

<sup>43</sup>Benjamin, p. 389.

<sup>44</sup>Reiter, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup>Stojka was offered the role of playing Sidonie Adelsberger's grandfather in the movie made from Erich Hackl's story *Abschied von Sidonie* in 1987. He remarks on what an honour it was for him to play in this movie based on the true story of Sidonie, whom he knew in Auschwitz (*Zuhause*, p. 109).

from his past, connecting his memories from the concentration camps with the difficulties of starting out anew in a different place, firmly setting his Holocaust memories into his childhood and recalling them as memories that he can tell. It is only at the end of his narrative that Stojka makes the reader confront the reality of these traumatic memories and Stojka's very real fear that the events of the past could be repeated: 'mich wieder nach Auschwitz bringen' (*Zuhause*, p. 114). The loss of security he feels in his expression of identity and his location of home is evident in this statement. This is one of the most recent experiences which Stojka shares with the reader, and it brings the memories he has written about into the present, revealing the continued presence of these memories in his own life rather than as the stories of his past.

A further illustration of Stojka's continued traumatised state can be found in one of Stojka's paintings, printed in the catalogue *Gas*. The painting depicts the stereotypical image of the *Zigeunerwagen*, made from wood and standing in a barren setting where two trees in the background look like skeletons and a lone lamp post stands next to the wagon. Underneath the image, still part of the painting, Stojka has written in jagged capital letters the words: 'Wir Sinti sind in der Gaskammer in Auschwitz'.<sup>46</sup> His use of the present tense here along with the pronoun which includes himself underlines the absence that is revealed in this painting and the loss of Romani life, tradition and identity in the Holocaust which he continually returns to in *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*.

#### 4.3.2 Heimat

Like the other authors discussed so far, Stojka strives in this text to establish his Romani identity, asserting no particularly binding ties to Austria through his ability to leave at any moment, yet repeatedly returning to Vienna. In addition, his use of the German language in writing underlines his connection with his home country. He explores the relationships between travelling, identity and 'being at home in this world' in his narrative. The memories contained in *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause* span sixty years of his life, detailing his memories of being in the concentration camps, the march from Flossenbürg to Regensburg, his search for the rest of his family with his brother after the liberation of the camps, his time travelling with the Foreign Legion, and his journeys to the United States, Portugal and Italy. Though he emphasises his ability to 'feel at home on this earth', perhaps positioning himself as the sort of 'Weltbürger' Améry is wary of in 'Wieviel Heimat braucht der Mensch?',<sup>47</sup> Stojka is, in fact, drawn back to Austria again and again. He remembers driving in his car and having to decide which direction he would go: 'und als ich an jenem Punkt kam, an dem ich die endgültige Entscheidung treffen mußte, zog es meine Hände am Lenkrad ganz von selbst nach rechts, zurück in mein Zigeunerleben, zurück nach Europa' (*Zuhause*, p. 12). His memories of the Holocaust in particular are

<sup>46</sup>For further discussion on the subject of Karl and Ceija Stojka and their art, see Susan Tebbutt, 'Disproportional Representation', pp. 159-177

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, p. 95.

recalled as a story that he tells friends and strangers and as part of a physical journey, illustrating his gaining distance from the past and continuous travelling away from persecution. Stojka's text bears a close similarity to Lessing's, in that he makes clear his aim to educate the reader through his text, emphasising that Romanies are 'normal' people. Interestingly, in contrast to Franz and Ceija Stojka, Karl Stojka presents Romanies as people who do not know a homeland or home, saying

wer keinen festen Platz und keine Heimat kennt, der läuft auch immer Gefahr, sich selbst zu verlieren. Daher haben die Zigeuner immer fest zusammengehalten, haben ihre Bräuche, Traditionen und ihre Sprache gepflegt und waren stets mißtrauisch, wenn jemand Fremder, ein Gadsche, kam und etwas über sie wissen wollte (*Zuhause*, p. 7).

His idea of losing or not knowing Heimat echoes Améry's assertion that 'wer sie [die Heimat] verloren hat, bleibt ein Verlorener'.<sup>48</sup> Karl Stojka highlights these cultural markers of Romani identity as a non-territorial or Ersatz-Heimat, emphasising the importance of customs, traditions and language.

Erika Thurner points out that after Romanies realised, upon returning from the concentration camps, that they would not be recognised as victims in Austria, they

tried to assimilate in order to avert aggression against them due to social separation and cultural differences. This resulted in alienation from their own traditions and their original culture. [...] The majority has given up the way of life of their forefathers in favor of a socially assimilated way of life.<sup>49</sup>

Although Stojka does admit homesickness for Austria while in the United States, he reveals much more about his Romani identity and seeks to inform the reader of Romani traditions, identifying ways in which Romanies are bound together through cultural traditions, nature and language; these elements provide for him the security of Heimat.<sup>50</sup> His home country of Austria, then, does not play the central role in his conception of Romani identity as it does in texts by Franz and Ceija Stojka.

Similarly to other Romani writers, Stojka employs images of nature and descriptions of the Romani relationship with the natural world in his text in order to assert Romani identity. Descriptions of nature and Romanies' relationships to the natural world have been a consistent theme in Romani writing.<sup>51</sup> Eder-Jordan writes that 'Roma-Autorinnen und Autoren schreiben auch über die Liebe, über die Beziehung des Menschen — und vor allem der Roma — zur Natur und über die Beziehung zu Sprache und Musik'.<sup>52</sup> Stojka uses cosmic images of nature specifically in order to show the reader what was lost in the concentration camps and to capture the essence of Romani identity.

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<sup>48</sup> Améry, p. 84.

<sup>49</sup> Thurner, p. 129.

<sup>50</sup> Améry, p. 84.

<sup>51</sup> See Hancock, *The Roads of the Roma*, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Eder, 'Roma Literatur', p. 117.

Einst waren die Zigeuner die Sterne am Firmament Europas, isoliert zwar, aber verbunden durch das gemeinsame Licht, das sie ausstrahlten, haben sie die Nacht erhellt. Hitler hat die Sterne vom Himmel geholt, hat sie weggewischt in seinen Konzentrationslagern und hat den Himmel der Zigeuner verdunkelt. Die wenigen, die übergeblieben sind, sind nun zu weit voneinander entfernt, das Licht verbindet sie nun nicht mehr miteinander, und langsam verlöschen sie (*Zuhause*, p. 110).

Here again Stojka articulates the Holocaust as an interruption of and destruction to Romani life and identity. In this way, Stojka points beyond what Aleida Assmann has said about inscribing one's own story on the landscape of one's home country;<sup>53</sup> in writing in German in order to inform his audience of the Romani Holocaust, Stojka does this too, but he also raises the point that Romani identity is something that is not grounded in one particular landscape or national identity, rather as something that belongs more broadly to nature, earth, or indeed, the cosmos. The cosmos is the most striking nature imagery that Stojka uses in his text and he uses the image of stars repeatedly in his narrative (*Zuhause*, p. 110) as a way of expressing the unity that binds different Romani groups across the world. Despite the title of his narrative asserting that he is at home 'auf der ganzen Welt', this statement binding Romanies to the natural world and to each other reveals a need for the universal elements of Heimat in the cosmos such as belonging, security and space.

Stojka's book reveals more than do the texts by Franz and Lessing about Romani life beyond the experiences of victimisation in the Third Reich. Ceija Stojka revealed much about her own life in her second book *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, and Karl Stojka also expresses a desire to show something about Romani life in order to counteract the stereotypes and misperceptions that define their group identity in Austrian society.

In Wahrheit sind wir Menschen wie alle anderen auch, haben Sorgen wie alle anderen Menschen und freuen uns über die gleichen Dinge wie sie. Nur daß unser Leben manchmal härter war als ihres, denn wer keinen festen Platz und keine Heimat kennt, der läuft auch immer Gefahr, sich selbst zu verlieren (*Zuhause*, p. 7).

This statement echoes Améry's assertion that to lose Heimat is to always be lost even if one learns 'in der Fremde nicht mehr wie betrunken umherzutaumeln, sondern mit einiger Furchtlosigkeit den Fuß auf den Boden zu setzen'.<sup>54</sup> Stojka illustrates this idea of being lost without Heimat, of losing one's self or one's identity. He does not engage with the landscape of Austria in his narrative as much as his sister or Franz do in their texts; he spends a lot of his narrative outside of Austria and does not describe great longings for returning to his Heimat. In fact, he even stays in Germany for quite some time at the end of the war with his brother, working on a farm; he writes that they did not think that the rest of their family had survived. Only when they learn that their mother and sisters are still alive do they go back to Vienna. Once there, Stojka

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<sup>53</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

<sup>54</sup> Améry, p. 84.

does not find it easy to engage in the traditional lifestyle of travelling with horses and wagons and goes on his own journeys back to Germany, and to France with the Foreign Legion. He experiences the 'verlorene Ich' Améry describes and relates this directly to the loss of Romani tradition that he himself experiences. It is this loss of identity that is at the center of Stojka's narrative, and he uses his memories to illustrate lost traditions as well as more authentic images of Romani life.

Repeatedly, Stojka emphasises that his feeling of Heimat, security, comes from his Romani identity. The images of nature he uses in his text are universal ones to emphasise the universal quality of Romani identity. The image of Romanies being akin to stars in the sky underline this point. He, like Lessing, Franz, and Ceija Stojka, begins his narrative with a clear statement of identity and origins: 'Ich bin ein Zigeuner. Ein Rom vom Stamme der Bagaretschi. Mein Vater war Zigeuner, meine Mutter und meine ganze Familie waren Zigeuner' (*Zuhause*, p. 7). In this passage, he reveals that he is originally a 'Bagaretschi Rom' and then goes on to provide the broader category of Romani (*Zigeuner*) in which he places this identity. In doing so, he explicitly shows the reader his intention in writing this text. His identity as a *Zigeuner* is of extreme importance to him and he is using this text in order to come out of hiding in the same way that Lessing does in his text. Ceija Stojka remembers that her brothers did not want her to write about her memories of the Holocaust because they wanted to conceal the family's Romani heritage.<sup>55</sup> Whether or not hiding his identity was something Karl Stojka did, it is true that many Romanies today feel it is necessary to lie about their identity and hesitate to admit to their Romani heritage.<sup>56</sup> Stojka addresses this directly in his opening and chooses to end the book with the statement: 'Einst waren wir wie die Musik der Zigeuner, laut, bunt und feurig, nun verweht die Melodie langsam im Wind der neuen Zeit der Leistung und des Konsums, ein ferner Klang, den man suchen muß, will man ihn hören' (*Zuhause*, p. 115). Stojka uses the space of his narrative to reveal the way Romani life was before, tinged with his own romantic imagery and nostalgia; however, as already illustrated, he does also acknowledge the part of Romani life which is not romantic and admits to his own lack of willingness to live a life outdoors. For example, he remembers taking his family to Italy, where a group of Romanies invites them to camp with them: 'Aber ich sah schon, das wird nichts, ich konnte einfach in der Primitivität nicht mehr leben, ich brauchte warmes Wasser, eine anständige Toilette, einen Herd und was sonst noch dazugehört zur Zivilisation' (*Zuhause*, p. 104). Stojka's own admission to wanting to lead a more contemporary lifestyle reveals another part of Romani group identity which grapples with its own role in the modern world and laments the traditions that it is losing to a changing society. A question that seems to be very much at the center of Stojka's narrative is what exactly contemporary Romani identity is; this includes, but goes beyond, the question

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<sup>55</sup>C. Stojka, Interview.

<sup>56</sup>Tebbutt, 'Conclusion', pp. 146-147.

of the Holocaust.

#### 4.3.3 Conflicting Identities and Landscape

The grim images that Stojka presents in his narrative of the concentration camps serve to make the reader aware of the fate of the Romanies in the Third Reich and to highlight the necessity for creating space for Romanies to express their identities without fear of persecution. Stojka concerns himself with this issue in his text, drawing to the reader's attention the victimisation Romanies faced in the concentration camps; in addition, through his travels after the end of the war which go against the stereotypical image of the 'lustige Zigeunerleben', he reveals Romani ways of life and the hardships they face in day to day life (*Zuhause*, p. 49).<sup>57</sup> What concerns Stojka as much as illustrating the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust is addressing the issue of the identity and culture that was lost. In his text, he also asserts a reluctance to attribute blame to anyone in particular for the atrocities committed in the Third Reich:

Man hat mich später oft gefragt: Bist du böse auf die Deutschen, die dir das angetan haben? Ich sage darauf immer: Ich bin den Deutschen nicht böse, denn es war nicht dieses oder jenes Volk, das mir die Kindheit und meine Gesundheit geraubt hat, es waren Menschen, die mir das angetan haben, und wenn ich etwas nicht verstehe, dann ist das, wieso Menschen andere Menschen so etwas antun können (*Zuhause*, p. 9).

Susan Tebbutt writes of this statement that 'despite the permanent scars he [Karl Stojka] has from his treatment by the Nazis he shows a remarkable reluctance to fall into the trap of stereotyping a national group'.<sup>58</sup> However, I would argue that Stojka's inclusion of this statement releasing Germans from his own personal feelings of anger or resentment goes beyond avoiding falling 'into the trap of stereotyping a national group'. There is more at stake for Stojka in making a claim so early in his book and, as has been discussed previously, this broadening of blame to a problem of humanity and expressing a desire to combat this with understanding. This echoes Franz's urging for love and forgiveness and Stojka's empathy for the perpetrators. I think that here again it shows a certain insecurity and a cautious venturing of identity. His refusal to articulate resentment or assign particular blame could be an indication of not knowing how his identity as a Romani would be received. Having been cast as thieves and liars throughout the German/Austrian cultural tradition, Stojka does not want his text to be misconstrued in order to reveal something negative about Romanies. In light of this, it is interesting to note how long Stojka took to write down his memories and in the end he only did it after his sister Ceija Stojka had first ventured into that uncharted territory in Austria. Like Lessing, Stojka takes a long time to come out of hiding and to tell his story. This also indicates the same kind

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<sup>57</sup>Martins-Heuß, *Zur mythischen Figur des Zigeuners*, p. 93. Compare with Ceija Stojka's reactions to this notion in *Reisende auf dieser Welt*, p. 131.

<sup>58</sup>Tebbutt, 'Challenging New Literary Images', p. 140.

of insecurity previously discussed in reference to Ceija Stojka's work which were written at a time when Austria was just emerging from a landscape of forgetting and addressing its own role in the Second World War and the victimisation of the Romanies.<sup>59</sup>

What is striking in Stojka's narrative, however, is his readiness to reveal unflattering details about his life to add to his portrayal of Romanies as 'ganz normale Menschen'. Whereas Ceija Stojka and Franz described Romanies in the camps holding together, sharing and helping one another, Karl Stojka paints another picture: 'Zusammenhalten unter den Häftlingen hat es nicht gegeben, jeder hat auf sich selber geschaut, höchstens, daß die Familien zusammengehalten haben' (*Zuhause*, p. 38). The extent to which he describes what he went through in the camps also reveals the level of humiliation he was subjected to and the cruelty he himself commits that differs strongly from the other Holocaust memories discussed so far. Stojka does often present himself as a heroic figure in this text, but he also records memories that do not necessarily show him in a positive or heroic light. For example, he tells of how he watched a man taking extra care with his last cigarette, savoring it every day, and projects that 'wahrscheinlich war es das Letzte, was er von seinem vorherigen Leben noch hatte' (*Zuhause*, p. 48). Stojka, however, arranges to trade the cigarette for a Red Cross package from the political prisoners and steals the cigarette from the man. He writes: 'Er versuchte nicht einmal, sich zu wehren oder mir nachzulaufen, nur als ich mich umdrehte, sah ich, daß er weinte. Aber sein Schmerz war mein Überleben, und leben wollte ich' (*Zuhause*, p. 48). These admissions of cruelty on his own part are justified in the text by saying this was what he had to do in order to survive. Further, he remembers cannibalism in Buchenwald and how every kind of behaviour by the prisoners in the camps became justified through the right to survive: 'Niemand hat etwas gesagt, die Menschen waren abgestumpft, und außerdem hatte er ein Recht zu überleben' (*Zuhause*, p. 48).

The scenes of cruelty and horror that Stojka describes and remembers being a part of also serve the important function in this text of showing the reader the kind of circumstances the prisoners were exposed to. Stojka's memories of Buchenwald are the scenes which Lessing did not see when he was required to pull down the window blind as he rode through Buchenwald with other musicians. Again, as in Lessing's narrative, the conflicting identities are evident as Stojka is a victim where Lessing is able to hide his Romani identity. Stojka emphasises that the cruelties prisoners carried out against each other in the name of survival were another way in which cruelty was inflicted on them. In this way, Stojka shows quite clearly what was lost:

Vielleicht ist das die furchtbarste Rache Hitlers an uns Zigeunern, in seinen KZ wurden wir geschliffen und erzogen, die Traditionen wurden gebrochen, das Zigeunerleben hat er uns ausgetrieben. Damit hat er uns unsere Kultur und unsere Identität weggenommen, so seltsam es klingt, aber die größte Barbarei der westlichen Kultur hat uns nichts anderes übriggelassen, als uns dieser Kultur auf Gedeih und

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<sup>59</sup>Menasse, pp. 14-23.



Verderb zu ergeben (*Zuhause*, p. 104).

The bitterness and sadness associated with this loss of Romani identity is an important presence in Stojka's narrative. The interruption of life and the reinterpretation of what is necessary for survival, who qualifies as family and how people treated one another, was another way in which identity was taken away and traditions were broken. Stojka mourns the loss of memories and traditions which were then replaced by these ugly and traumatic memories.

Interesting in Stojka's narrative is also his willingness to write about subjects which were normally considered taboo in Romani culture.<sup>60</sup> Reemtsma identifies rules in Romani culture as to what information is considered to be safe to tell non-Romanies.<sup>61</sup> Although revealing incidents of sexual assault or harassment is rare in Holocaust survivor testimony,<sup>62</sup> Stojka also describes himself as a victim of this kind of cruelty. He remembers one guard who was well-known among prisoners as being particularly brutal to children in the camp and whom they called 'Kurt, der Österreicher'. Stojka recalls one time where Kurt singled him out:

Kurt brachte mich in seinen Raum, und ich mußte mich ausziehen und drehen, und er sah mich lange von allen Seiten an, während er offenbar immer erregter wurde. Plötzlich warf er mir meine Kleider zu und warf mich nackt, wie ich war, aus dem Zimmer in den Schnee hinaus und schrie ich solle mich zurück in die Baracke scheren (*Zuhause*, p. 49).

This open discussion of himself naked and vulnerable in this way is something that would probably not be considered acceptable to talk about, let alone make public to non-Romanies. Other narratives by Romani Holocaust survivors do not reveal such a level of personal humiliation and vulnerability. Franz, for example, remembers resisting sexual humiliation in her narrative, defiantly letting her hair be cut off rather than become a prostitute. Stojka, however, shows himself to be vulnerable and helpless in remembering his own experience of sexual humiliation as a young boy. Perhaps he is more comfortable revealing this information because he was a young boy at the time, and his victimisation by 'Kurt der Österreicher' is clear; Stojka can reveal to the reader the Romani traditions and customs that were broken. His memories are interesting to consider alongside Ceija Stojka's statement that her brother had read the first draft of her memories and told her she revealed too much about her family. She remembers him saying that he did not want people in Vienna to know that he was a Romani.<sup>63</sup> Therefore it is noteworthy that he includes memories in his book which reveal himself to be vulnerable to humiliation. Another, different, kind of humiliating experience is told with remarkable frankness in the episode involving a packet of beans Stojka finds on the long march from Flossenbürg to

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<sup>60</sup>See Eder-Jordan, 'Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma', p. 12 and Martins-Heuß, 'Reflections on Collective Identity', pp. 204-209 on these taboos.

<sup>61</sup>Reemtsma, p. 66.

<sup>62</sup>Hardman, p. 7 and Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, p. 138

<sup>63</sup>See *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, p. 98.

Regensburg. The sickness and diarrhoea he experiences after eating them, arguably already embarrassing, is followed by a portrayal of himself as vulnerable and weak as a result, completely reliant on the others around him who have to risk their lives to carry him between them: 'Sie nahmen mich in der Reihe mit. Ich konnte mich nicht mehr zurückhalten, und während ich so dahintaumelte, rann mir der blutige Kot an beiden Füßen herunter' (*Zuhause*, p. 55). In the other narratives discussed so far in this thesis, this kind of openness regarding the authors' own vulnerability in the camps has been rare. Stojka breaks new ground with these descriptions that admit his own weaknesses.

Eder-Jordan points out that Romani authors refer to

Elemente aus der Tradition der Roma in die Literatur [...] zum Beispiel Feste, Bräuche oder Reinheitsgebote. So kann in einer Erzählung oder einem Roman das Übertreten eines strengen Reinheitsgebotes oder das Brechen eines Tabus der Auslöser für weitere Handlung sein.<sup>64</sup>

Karl Stojka does not shy away from portraying his vulnerability which would seem to go against his subsequent portrayal of himself as a hero and claim that his family might not have survived if he had not been in Auschwitz to help.<sup>65</sup> In these situations and he breaks with Romani tradition and purity laws. Reemtsma points out that the 'Konzept der Reinheit/Unreinheit und andere Gruppenregeln wurden durch Unterbringung vieler Sinti und Roma im "Zigeunerfamilienlager" in Auschwitz-Birkenau und andere Verfolgungsmaßnahmen entwertet oder zerstört'.<sup>66</sup> Stojka presents these experiences which are normally unacceptable to speak about in Romani culture as part of the horror that was inflicted on him, thereby educating the reader as to the unacceptability of these and subverting the stereotypical notion that Romanies are dirty and sexually promiscuous, but also crucially making the point that this was a massive part of the destruction of Romani identity in the Holocaust.

Although some of the memories Stojka includes, particularly those concerning his treatment of his wives,<sup>67</sup> may pose a challenge for readers, it is important to read these sections for what they reveal about the hardships that Romanies, perhaps particularly Romani women, face. These hardships differ profoundly from the stereotypical carefree and seductive 'Carmen' figure mostly associated with Romani women. Stojka reveals images of his personal life and in doing so deconstructs myths around Romani group identity without reconstructing them into another myth of perfection. The references that he makes to his treatment of the women in his

<sup>64</sup>Eder-Jordan, 'Roma Literatur', p. 117.

<sup>65</sup>Compare this heroic portrayal to Otto Rosenberg's portrayal of himself in *Das Brennglas*.

<sup>66</sup>Reemtsma, p. 66.

<sup>67</sup>For example, Stojka writes about leaving his first girlfriend immediately after her telling him that she is pregnant. He escapes to France in order to avoid her: 'Denn ich bin von einem Tag zum anderen zur französischen Fremdenlegion gegangen. Nicht ganz freiwillig, wie ich zugeben muß. Es war ein Mädchen dran schuld' (*Zuhause*, p. 81). He also describes leaving his first wife after they had two children because she was upset at having to stay home with the children while he would leave for weeks to go to markets. He also remembers when he decided to leave for Portugal from one day to the next, selling the car and taking off without telling his second wife. When he came back, she said nothing and only cooked him his favorite meal (*Zuhause*, p. 102).

life also brings to mind the difficulties that Ceija Stojka described facing when she began to write.<sup>68</sup> From Karl Stojka's text it can be seen that Romani women continue having to contend a patriarchal family structure.<sup>69</sup> In fact, Stojka generally seeks to dismantle the notion of the carefree *Zigeunerleben* in this text by revealing the harsh realities of looking for work and living with very little money. For example, he describes leaving each of his children and his wife on different street corners of New York City shortly after they first arrive there in order to try to sell more carpets. Later on in the narrative, after he and his family move to Florida, the financial difficulties worsen:

Eines Tages ging alles zu Ende, der Wagen brach zusammen, und unser Geld war verbraucht, und was das Schlimmste war, wir hatten auch kein Geld mehr, um neue Ware zu kaufen. Jetzt sahen wir keine schönen Blumen mehr, und die höchste Palme war uns egal, die Farben Floridas waren grau, und wir wurden immer mutloser (*Zuhause*, p. 78).

This admission of the hardships his family faced, linked with memories of the difficulties involved in starting over again after the end of WWII, successfully challenges the idea of the carefree existence and romantic image of *Zigeuner* living life on the road. He forces the reader to confront the reality of Romani life which includes financial hardship, worry and family difficulties.

#### 4.3.4 Genre

Susanna Egan points out in her *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography* that the autobiographer 'creates [...] a fictive self to narrate the events of his life and a fictive story to contain those events'.<sup>70</sup> This element of the storyline and the fictional qualities that make up an autobiography through its writing is part of what needs to be read in order for the representation of the author's identity and story to become clear. Stojka's narrative, with himself as the main character, does have elements of the *Bildungsroman* in that it shows his life from childhood to old age, learning from and admitting to his mistakes and living beyond the traumatic memories of his past. Although Stojka admits to his own faults and writes 'Wenn man so zurückblickt, dann sieht man vieles, was man falsch gemacht hat, aber alle diese Dinge haben mich auch geformt und den Menschen aus mir gemacht, der ich heute bin' (*Zuhause*, p. 105), he does make himself the central and heroic character of his story. Stojka does portray himself and his survival strategies, as well as his role as a helper in the kitchen, as the reason most of his family survived. The structure of his story is particularly interesting in that he reveals his story through a construction of memories within memories. Stojka goes back and forth between the

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<sup>68</sup>Ceija Stojka, *Verborgenen*, p. 98.

<sup>69</sup>Eder-Jordan, 'Zur Stellung der Frau bei Sinti und Roma', p. 15. Here, Eder-Jordan points out that the position of the woman in Romani families is seen as an important part of Romani tradition. To change the role of women in Romani families could mean the end of Romani tradition.

<sup>70</sup>Susanna Egan, *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984), p. 66-67.

early seventies when he was living in the US, his time in the concentration camps, and his travels in the years after the end of the Second World War. Stojka's 'autobiographical intention' in this text is to show the reader an authentic picture of Romani life and also to record his memories of the Holocaust.<sup>71</sup> As previously discussed, he highlights the stereotypes he wants to deconstruct at the very beginning of his text and goes on to reveal what he feels is a more authentic picture of Romani identity, thus making his autobiographical pact with his readership clear.<sup>72</sup>

Here again, Henry Greenspan's observation in *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors* of survivors and their testimony as 'particular people who bring to retelling their specific concerns, identities and styles' is relevant.<sup>73</sup> Stojka brings an entirely new narrative to the small body of German language Romani writing in that he brings his own concern about the loss of Romani identity to his text and represents his memories through a very contemporary concern of further loss. It is evident that for Karl Stojka, as for Lessing, the recording of Holocaust memories is part of the narrative of revealing identities which have been suppressed and persecuted in the past. For these narratives, the way the story is told and the context in which it is told is very important. Stojka does not endeavour only to record historical events that took place during the Third Reich, but is attempting also to illustrate and draw attention to the marginalisation and lack of acknowledgement which goes beyond that. In order to do this, he pushes at the boundaries of genre, revealing his Holocaust memories as part of a wider narrative of his life, showing through the structure of his text the fact that life did continue after those traumatic events. Connecting his memories from starting over again in the United States with the 'Geschichte der kleinen Kinder im grossen Lager von Auschwitz' (*Zuhause*, p. 32) might be seen to trivialise these traumatic memories. However, it is possible that Stojka uses this method of telling his story to point out the continued hardships he and other Romanies faced after the Second World War. Also, it shows how these traumatic memories stayed with him throughout his life and affected his identity even afterwards. As Eakin argues, narrative forms are a part of human identity, that is, narrative structures form who we are.<sup>74</sup>

There is no information given as to Reinhard Pohanka's role in the writing of *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*. Stojka and Pohanka are listed as co-authors, but there is no foreword or afterword by Pohanka and it is unclear how much of a role he had in the writing of the narrative. The reader is made aware of Pohanka's presence in the creation of the text, but knows very little of what exact role he played. In Franz's narrative we saw contributions from Reinhold Lehmann and, in the 1992 and 2001 editions, an essay by Wolfgang Benz was included. In Ceija Stojka's books, Karin Berger is a strong presence in that she is acknowledged as the

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<sup>71</sup>Eakin, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup>See Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Pact', pp. 3-30.

<sup>73</sup>Greenspan, p. 169.

<sup>74</sup>Eakin, p. 3.

editor of the texts and also wrote the introductions to the books. Her interviews with Ceija Stojka are also published in the second sections of the books.<sup>75</sup> Lessing also had a foreword written by Günter Walraff included in his text. Stojka's text, however, stands alone. He does not include documents in *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause* to verify his statements. Although he includes historical facts in his text such as the number of prisoners who were sent on the march from Flossenbürg to Regensburg, he does not include copies of documents to prove the authenticity of his statements like Lessing does in *Mein Leben im Versteck*. Other Romani writers, such as Otto Rosenberg, whose work will be discussed in the next chapter, and Walter Winter, include footnotes to verify their statements. Stojka does not make use of these. The only documentation he provides in this text are copies of family photographs at the end of the narrative, which illustrate the family members who were lost and those who remain. These photographs include images of his family before and after the Holocaust, including one picture of his father from 1941 and a picture of Karl Stojka's school class taken in 1942. I would argue, however, that Stojka's text has very little to do with setting the historical record straight. His text is one of establishing individual and collective identity and battling against what he sees as the loss of Romani culture. Footnotes would do very little good to help this cause and his inclusion of photographs at the end of the text serve to illustrate the way of life that he feels was lost through the Holocaust and its aftermath for the Romani communities living in Germany and Austria.<sup>76</sup> The images that Stojka includes are also of his wife and children and their life in the United States in the seventies and of his visits to the Holocaust Memorial museum in Washington D.C. as well as to the Pope. All stages of the narrative and the different layers of memory represented in the text are authenticated by the photographs which conclude the book.

#### 4.4 The Loss of Heimat

Karl Stojka and Alfred Lessing both illustrate their relationships with their own respective Austrian and German identities in their autobiographical narratives. Central to the works of both of these authors is Jean Améry's concept of the 'verlorene Ich'. Each author explores the conflicting nature of their identifications of themselves as German, Austrian and Romani. Tony Kushner warns that 'at present, victim testimony is almost exclusively, if well-meaningly, used to provide supplementary forms of Holocaust representation that serve the purpose of either giving a human face to the millions murdered or to show the vileness of what was done to them'.<sup>77</sup> I think that Lessing and Stojka's books do go beyond the portrayal of their traumatic memories for the purpose of lending a human face to the tragic killings of Romanies in the

<sup>75</sup>See *Reisende auf dieser Welt* and *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*

<sup>76</sup>However, in Karl Stojka's exhibition catalogue *Ein Kind in Birkenau*, Stojka does include documentation of what his family went through in the concentration camps, including pictures taken by Eva Justin for 'racial research'.

<sup>77</sup>Kushner, p. 50.

Holocaust and do, as Kushner suggests, challenge the reader to acknowledge the context of what they write and what else it tells us about the writers. Their experiences in the Holocaust and the representation of the memories of those experiences provides them with the space and the platform to explore their own lives and identities and thereby reveal much to the reader about the context of those memories. For both of these writers, each inexperienced in the act of writing, the motivation for recording their own memories of the victimisation of Romanies in the Third Reich was to dismantle the myths surrounding Romani culture and identity. Both sought to counteract what Eder-Jordan characterises as ‘ein stummes Leiden’.<sup>78</sup> In representing their memories, both of these men decided to tell their stories through the medium of journeys. According to Kushner, ‘Holocaust testimony should be studied seriously through critical engagement because the lives of ordinary people, and their ways of telling their life stories, matter’.<sup>79</sup> These texts by Lessing and Stojka, with their emphasis on revealing new information about Romanies in Germany and Austria as well as their own identities and lives provide an opportunity for the critical engagement Kushner suggests.

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<sup>78</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 120.

<sup>79</sup>Kushner, pp. 50-51.

## Chapter 5

# Communicating Memory: Otto and Marianne Rosenberg

This chapter will explore the relationship between narratives by Otto Rosenberg and his daughter, Marianne Rosenberg. Otto Rosenberg survived Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen as a boy and recounted these memories to Ulrich Enzensberger; these were published in narrative form as *Das Brennglas* in 1999.<sup>1</sup> Marianne Rosenberg, well known as a singer who first became famous at the age of fifteen with her signature ‘Schlager’ hits such as ‘Er gehört zu mir’, published her autobiography, *Kokolores* in 2006.<sup>2</sup> The objective of this chapter is primarily to explore Otto Rosenberg’s memories of his experiences in the concentration camps of the Third Reich, the importance of family in these memories, and the way they are presented in *Das Brennglas*, which has been very well received internationally. Part of the reason for this reception inevitably can be attributed to his daughter’s fame. Although Marianne Rosenberg’s narrative takes on the characteristics of a ‘typical’ celebrity autobiography and mostly deals with the details of her career: individual concerts, auditions, performances and her struggle to find a performance identity, the subtitle of her autobiography, *Wie ich lernte Marianne Rosenberg zu sein*, has, I would argue, a direct reference to the ‘marking’ of herself as the daughter of a Sinti Holocaust survivor. The chapter will therefore explore generational memory and the second generation text of which there are still very few contributions from the Romani community.

### 5.1 Otto and Marianne Rosenberg, *Das Brennglas* and *Kokolores*

Otto Rosenberg was born in Ostpreussen in 1927. His parents, both Sinti who traveled and worked in Germany, separated when Rosenberg was only a few months old and he and one sister were sent to live with his grandmother in Berlin. His grandmother led a more settled

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Rosenberg and Ulrich Enzensberger, *Das Brennglas* (Berlin: Eichborn, 1998).

<sup>2</sup>Marianne Rosenberg, *Kokolores* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2006).

life in that she and her family did not leave the Berlin area, but lived in wagons and settled in various locations in and around Berlin for longer periods of time. Rosenberg recalls

Wir wohnten einfach und schlicht auf angemieteten Privatparkplätzen. Die Feldtmannstrasse war zur Strasse hinab geschlossen und hatte ein richtiges Tor. Da standen mindestens 10 Wagen. Wenn uns ein Platz nicht mehr gefiel, haben wir angespannt. Die Pferde liehen wir uns von Verwandschaft oder von Bekannten (*Brennglas*, p. 10).

He, along with his family and other Romani families living in Berlin were interned in the Marzahn Sammellager in 1936; this was part of the action taken in order to ensure that Berlin was free of all racially inferior peoples for the start of the Olympic Games. Sinti and Roma were sent to the outskirts of the city and a camp surrounded by barbed wire was slowly erected; at its only exit, a police barrack was built to ensure the residents were kept in their new home.<sup>3</sup>

At that time Marzahn was just a small town with fields separating it from Berlin; these fields were used for the city's sewage. Rosenberg, among the first to arrive there, witnessed the camp's growth as more and more Sinti and Roma were forced to live there:

überall waren Gräben. Die Wiesen um uns her waren Rieselfelder. Und ständig kamen Wagen, die Jauche in diese Gräben pumpten. Es hat furchtbar gestunken. Normalerweise hätten wir uns an einem solchen Ort nie aufgehalten, schon allein wegen unseren Gesetze nicht, die das verbieten (*Brennglas*, p. 18).

The fact that the Sinti and Roma were pushed to the outskirts of town and forced to live in such close proximity to the sewage from Berlin points all too obviously to how they were regarded and categorised in those times. The fact that no consideration was given to the taboo associated with proximity to human waste in Romani culture only added further insult.<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg spent six years in the camp at Marzahn, with more and more Sinti and Roma being brought there through the years. At the age of thirteen, he was forced to work in an arms factory. Much of *Das Brennglas* tells of his time in Marzahn, giving insight into the conditions of this *Sammellager* and detailing the knowledge and rumors that circulated the camp about the 'Konzertlager': 'Ja, Konzertlager, so wurde gesagt. Das hörte sich doch gut an' (*Brennglas*, p. 28). Here, Rosenberg remembers the fear of where people were disappearing to and that people spoke of in hushed voices of a place where terrible and unimaginable things happened. The denial of impending doom by turning *Konzentrationslager* to 'Konzertlager' points to an attempt to allay fears of what was to come. Rosenberg was sent to Marzahn at the beginning of its construction: 'inzwischen wurden Baracken gebracht und Fundamente gelegt und die Baracken aufgestellt

<sup>3</sup>For further information on the Sammellager in Marzahn, see Wolfgang Wippermann and Ute Brucker-Boroujerdi, 'Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager in Berlin III. Das "Zigeunerlager" Marzahn' in *Berlin-Forschungen II*, ed. by Wolfgang Ribbe, (Berlin: Colloquium, 1987), pp. 189-200. See also Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 96-97. For a discussion of Leni Riefenstahl's use of the prisoners of Marzahn for her film *Tiefland*, see Reimar Gilsenbach and Otto Rosenberg, 'Riefenstahls Liste. Zum Gedenken an den ermordeten Komparsen', *Berliner Zeitung*, 17 February, 2001.

<sup>4</sup>Zimmermann, p. 97.



worden. Das waren ehemalige Wehrmachtsbaracken' (*Brennglas*, p. 28).<sup>5</sup> In 1942 Rosenberg was deported to Auschwitz, and survived the horrors of Dora, Ellrich and Bergen-Belsen before liberation in 1945. The rest of Rosenberg's family, to which he counts 51 members, were killed in the concentration camps of the Third Reich.

At first, Rosenberg was hesitant to identify himself as Romani and encouraged his daughter, who at the age of fifteen entered the public eye as a singer, to do the same – urging her not to acknowledge her heritage. Marianne Rosenberg remembers that at one point early in her career her father warned her:

Rede nicht darüber, sage, mein Vater sieht so dunkel aus, weil wir aus Ungarn stammen. Niemand will diese Geschichte hören. Niemand will mit dieser Vergangenheit konfrontiert werden. [...] Es wird deiner Karriere schaden, wenn sie es wissen. Du wirst keine Platten mehr verkaufen (*Kokolores*, p. 125).

Rosenberg also had the tattooed number on his arm, the constant visible reminder of Auschwitz, covered up in a tattoo parlor by the image of an angel. This is especially significant when considered in relation to Rosenberg's deep religious devotion. He says that if he had been able to go to school and if Auschwitz had not happened, he would have liked to become a priest. This covering of those experiences with an angel points to Rosenberg's marking himself with a symbol of salvation through the traumatic memories, an attempt to answer his own question of 'warum habe ich überlebt?' Marianne Rosenberg remembers his resolve to have this done on a trip to Hamburg for one of her performances and contemplates the notion of 'ein Engel für Auschwitz' (*Kokolores*, p. 125). The very permanence of the Auschwitz tattoo on his body, which marked him as the property of the Third Reich, was covered up by an angel, challenging the permanent quality of the mark with Rosenberg's faith in salvation. Primo Levi observed the significance of the being marked as a property of the Nazis, saying

the operation was not very painful and lasted no more than a minute, but it was traumatic. Its symbolic meaning was clear to everyone: this is an indelible mark, you will never leave here; this is the mark with which slaves are branded and cattle sent to slaughter, and that is what you have become.<sup>6</sup>

When Rosenberg decides to change that indelible mark, he makes the choice to cover it up with an angel rather than to have it removed. In this way he preserves and yet transforms the memory into something ambivalent — a marker of survival and a marker of loss. The angel brings to mind the way of life that he lost through the horrors of the concentration camps.

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<sup>5</sup>Today there is a stone in Marzahn commemorating the internment camp there. It is known as the Sinti-Stein and every year on the second Sunday in June, the Sinti of Berlin go to Marzahn to remember those who died in the camp and those who were deported from it. The stone reads: 'Vom Mai 1936 bis zur Befreiung durch die ruhmreiche Sowjetarmee litten in einem Zwangslager unweit dieser Stätte hunderte Angehörige der Sinti. Ehre den Opfern.' This was the first memorial to Romani Holocaust victims in the GDR and in Germany as whole. It was erected by Reimar Gilsenbach, journalist and Romani rights activist in the GDR, in 1985. In the same year, a memorial plaque was put up in the museum at Buchenwald remembering its Romani prisoners. See Margalit, p. 258.

<sup>6</sup>Quotd. in Erin McGlothlin, *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration* (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), p. 21.

The sense of shame at his experiences and the desire to silence his memories that his daughter recalls here came to an end in the early 1980s when the victimisation of the Sinti and Roma in the Holocaust first gained official attention and recognition. At this time, Otto Rosenberg became well known as an activist for Roma rights, particularly for advocating the memorialisation of the Sinti and Roma as victims of the Holocaust, and as the founder and director of the *Landesverband der Sinti und Roma in Berlin-Brandenburg*.<sup>7</sup> He pursued pensions for those Romanies who had been imprisoned in Marzahn and who had developed illnesses or disabilities. Kerstin Decker writes in *Der Tagesspiegel*: ‘Rosenberg setzte auch die Rente durch für die Sinti und Roma, die im Marzahner Lager der Nazis waren und krank wurden davon. Er sagte immer: Einer muss sich kümmern um unsere Leute’.<sup>8</sup> He also led the fight for compensation, appealing to fifty Berlin companies to contribute money towards the compensation for forced labor by Sinti and Roma during the Third Reich.<sup>9</sup> As a way of bringing the experiences of German Sinti to light, Rosenberg decided to have his memories recorded. These became *Das Brennglas* in 1999. This book was subsequently published in its English translation by Helmut Böglér as *A Gypsy in Auschwitz*.<sup>10</sup> This text is possibly the most well known of Romani accounts of Holocaust experiences due presumably in part to the fame of his daughter, Marianne Rosenberg, but also to Otto Rosenberg’s status as a Romani activist in Berlin. After his death in 2005, his daughter, Petra Rosenberg, took over the leadership of the *Landesverband der Deutschen Sinti und Roma*; Marianne Rosenberg went on to publish her own autobiography in 2006.

Otto Rosenberg married for the second time and started a family in Berlin Weissensee in 1953. Up to that point, he had supported himself as a dance musician, but then started to earn his living selling antiques. Marianne Rosenberg was born in 1954. All of his seven children were musically talented, and Marianne Rosenberg often performed with her siblings as children. Their father would take them to bars where they would perform for money donated by the patrons. Marianne Rosenberg was the only one of the siblings who went on to become a professional musician. When she was fifteen, she won a competition at the ‘Romantisches Cafe’ in Berlin in 1969, competing with her first song ‘Mr. Paul McCartney’ and making herself well known through her emotional interpretation of lyrics. She soon began to earn enough with her music to help her family financially (*Kokolores*, pp. 80-88). Her father often accompanied her when she had performances out of town, acting as her manager. As I will show later in this chapter, Otto Rosenberg greatly influenced his daughter’s life; his request that she keep her family background secret greatly affected her sense of identity as she struggled with her father’s silence about his background and her own forced silence. She writes that ‘Ich hielt

<sup>7</sup>Kerstin Decker, ‘Erbschaft des Stolzes’, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 17 December 2001, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Decker, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Otto Rosenberg and Ulrich Enzensberger, *A Gypsy in Auschwitz. As told to Ulrich Enzensberger*, trans. by Helmut Böglér (London: London House, 1999).

mich an dieses Gebot, viel zu lang. Erst Mitte der achtziger Jahre konnte ich darüber reden' (*Kokolores*, p. 125).

Further, I will demonstrate that her struggle with finding a musical identity provides an interesting parallel with her father's search for identity in his own text. Marianne Rosenberg's musical career had its ups and downs and she became best known for her *Schlager* songs despite her attempts to move away from that musical genre with the trends of the eighties, teaming up with Marianne Enzensberger and using ever more lavish sets and dramatic musical productions. This friendship led to a connection with Marianne Enzensberger's then husband, Ulrich Enzensberger, who became fascinated by Otto Rosenberg's story and wanted to help bring it into the public domain.<sup>11</sup> Today, Marianne Rosenberg continues to perform musically and also gives readings; she speaks openly about her father as a survivor of the concentration camps of the Third Reich and growing up in the midst of the silent presence of Auschwitz. Sigrid Weigel describes 'the concept and narrative of "generation" as symbolic form, that is, as a cultural pattern for constructing history'.<sup>12</sup> She goes on to point out that with second and later generational memory the 'belatedness of symptoms [...] that marks all trauma has entered historical time because it transgresses the period of an individual life, and the formation of symptoms is carried over into later generations'.<sup>13</sup> The 'marking' of trauma present in *Kokolores* clearly displays the effects of generational memory when read in relation to Otto Rosenberg's *Das Brennglas*.

## 5.2 Generational Memory and Identity

Both Otto Rosenberg's *Das Brennglas* and Marianne Rosenberg's *Kokolores* are contributions to the small number of texts published in Germany by German Sinti and Roma. It is therefore useful to analyze them according to the same theories that have been used for the previous texts in this thesis. The same insecurity in writing is present in both of these texts; both authors tend to write about topics which have been tried and tested by others, the topics which are acceptable to the audience they target, revealing very little else about their personal lives. Erin McGlothlin, in her book about second generation Holocaust literature, writes that 'in its often obsessive engagement with the Holocaust past, the second generation seeks to artistically restore some of the holes that riddle the memory of the catastrophe, to imagine an event of which one cannot be epistemologically certain'.<sup>14</sup> Marianne Rosenberg does not seek this kind of reconstruction or filling in of the holes in her father's memory in her text. She mentions her father and the silence that pervaded her childhood, but she does not attempt to re-imagine his experiences or to fill in

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<sup>11</sup>See Knud Kohr, 'Von Marzahn nach Auschwitz', *tip Magazin*, Berlin, 1999.

<sup>12</sup>Sigrid Weigel, "'Generation" as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945', *The Germanic Review*, 77 4 (2002), 264-277. Here, p. 265.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>14</sup>McGlothlin, p. 10.

what she does not know. She reveals little more about his experiences and memories than he has already published in *Das Brennglas* and when she does write about him, she focuses instead on the gaps that she feels in his life which also mark her childhood and identity – specifically, the missing members of his family. Most of Marianne Rosenberg’s autobiography centers on her musical career, revealing very little of herself and maintaining a private sphere around herself. However, the essence of ‘marking’ to which Weigel has referred as a characteristic of second generation Holocaust writing, does make itself keenly felt in her text through the images of her father’s sadness that were so prevalent in Marianne’s childhood.<sup>15</sup> In this chapter I will discuss the complexities of genre and narrative voice as well as the ‘working through of trauma’ in Otto Rosenberg’s *Das Brennglas*; in reference to this discussion, I will then analyze Marianne Rosenberg’s autobiography for evidence of ‘marking’ of her father’s traumatic experiences in her own search for identity.

### 5.3 Otto Rosenberg and *Das Brennglas*

#### 5.3.1 ‘Ein Berliner Sinto’: Trauma, Heimat and Identity

It is made clear from the first page of *Das Brennglas* that Otto Rosenberg’s narrative was written down as it was told to Ulrich Enzensberger. The English edition includes ‘as told to Ulrich Enzensberger’ in the title; additionally, it emphasises the importance of the oral tone to the work in the publisher’s note at the start of the text:

it was felt that the language and style of the spoken account was far more authentic and convincing than would be the case were the text to have been edited, rewritten or polished to make perfect grammatical English. This is the way Otto Rosenberg told his story – simply, as the memories came to him and with moving simplicity (p. 4).

In a review in *Der Spiegel*, a similar emphasis is placed on Enzensberger’s ability to capture Rosenberg’s tone and voice in his transcription: ‘Der Schriftsteller Ulrich Enzensberger hat sie aufgezeichnet, versehen mit klugen Anmerkungen. Er hat die eigentümliche Diktion des Erzählers bewahrt, den leisen lakonischen Unterton, der verhindert, da das Buch als bloße Leidensgeschichte gelesen wird’.<sup>16</sup> The fact that from the outset the roles of the storyteller and the transcriber are clearly defined and acknowledged sets it apart from the other texts discussed so far in this thesis. These all assert themselves as accounts written by the author; the extent to which the second name associated with the text, the editor, is involved remains unclear. Crucial to these Romani writers’ theme of ‘working through’ trauma is the practice of writing as a therapeutic exercise which helps them to order the experiences and memories that continue to haunt them.

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<sup>15</sup>Weigel, p. 269.

<sup>16</sup>Review in *Der Spiegel*, 11 May, 1998, p. 93.

Otto Rosenberg does not include images of being driven to write and record his narrative. In contrast to Franz or Ceija Stojka, who provide the reader with images of this compulsion to write, Rosenberg does not explicitly discuss his motivations for having his memories recorded. This aspect of the 'working through trauma' through the act of writing is not present in Rosenberg's work. He does not build up as much of a relationship with the act of writing as Franz and Ceija Stojka do, and indicates his exclusion from formal schooling as a possible reason for his choice not to write his narrative. Children, he remembers, were not allowed to attend the school in Berlin-Marzahn, but had only one teacher for all the children in the camp itself. 'Wir besaßen ein Rechenheft, ein Schmierheft, ein Schönschreibheft, eine Lesefibel und ein Rechenbuch', he remembers. 'Mehr hatten wir nicht, das war's. Viel gelernt haben wir nicht' (*Brennglas*, p. 19).<sup>17</sup> By the time the narrative was written, Rosenberg was well respected as a political activist and community leader, but through his emphasis on his lack of formal school education, he suggests that writing was not something with which he felt particularly comfortable. The narrative is told from the perspective of the child experiencing the traumatic uprooting from his home, the internment in Marzahn, and the atrocities of the concentration camps where he was subsequently deported.

Despite Rosenberg's desire for his memories to be transcribed because of their importance as a document for the causes that he, as a Romani leader, had the knowledge and authority to support and promote, he does not use this knowledge and authority to tell his story. Rather, he uses the voice of the victim, transcribed. The authoritative voice in the narrative belongs to the transcriber / editor Ulrich Enzensberger through the use of endnotes which provide the academic, historical support for Rosenberg's words. The reasons for this decision are, of course, ambiguous and can only be guessed at. In this case, one questions how much involvement Rosenberg had in the writing of the text and in the decision to include endnotes to support the text. Whether or not there was a clear decision to institute a child's narrative voice in the telling of these memories is unclear; the childlike tone of the narrative is particularly reminiscent of Ceija Stojka's *Wir Leben im Verborgenen*, though it is important to note Rosenberg's child voice is older. It is worth discussing what purpose this display of youth and vulnerability plays in Romani narratives and the memory of the Holocaust; I will explore this question with regard to Rosenberg's work later in the chapter under the section *Genre* in order to establish whether naivety is a stylistic trait of this group of texts.

There is also some suggestion that Rosenberg was not happy with the way Enzensberger transcribed the account. When Rosenberg was invited to give readings, he seldom read from the book itself, and it has been suggested that this was because he was not happy with the way Enzensberger had written it, and preferred to narrate his memories without the text in front of him. At one reading at Schloss Biesdorf in Berlin in 1999, he remarked: 'Das, was ich jetzt

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<sup>17</sup>See Lewy, pp. 89-90 on the expulsion of Romanies from German schools.

erzähle, kommt in dem Buch nicht so gut raus'.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that Rosenberg was more emotionally invested in the account as a way of working through his personal experiences than comes across in the text through the use of endnotes and the consistent message of wanting to draw attention to the Romani Holocaust. If he had intended the text to be read as a history lesson and a truth document, he might not have been as upset about the way it was transcribed; his insistence on telling his story in his own way rather than reading it out during a 'reading' suggests that Rosenberg felt some discomfort in sharing with Enzensberger the ownership of the way his experiences are narrated; perhaps it was the filtering of his own voice and its constructed nature that did not feel comfortable to Rosenberg during his readings.

Otto Rosenberg's narrative attempts to make sense of traumatic memories, ordering them coherently into a narrative arc, but his text emphasises a different aspect of the telling of traumatic memories. Because it is unclear to what extent the editor was responsible for the ordering of memory and experience into the form of the narrative, it is difficult to determine the process of LaCapra's idea of 'working through' in this text.<sup>19</sup> However, as suggested above, there are elements of the text which suggest that Rosenberg is indeed working through these traumatic memories in narrating them and is invested in the 'articulatory practice' of working through that LaCapra describes. Indeed, it is useful to consider LaCapra's idea of the process of mourning as an element of the working through of trauma in relation to Rosenberg's narrative. LaCapra writes that

mourning involves [...] a relation to the past which involves recognizing its difference from the present – simultaneously remembering and taking leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others.<sup>20</sup>

Determining Rosenberg's 'relation to the past' when recalling these memories is difficult, as the voice used to narrate his experiences has been constructed and therefore the 'purity' of his voice has been affected. The editor's presence in the text makes the reader aware of a voice separate from the victim's, who calmly inserts the relevant historical information and who possesses the capability to take out any 'acting out' elements when forming a coherent, chronological narrative. In reference to Walter Stanoski Winter's text, *WinterZeit*, transcribed from oral interviews, Thomas Neumann and Michael Zimmermann elucidate their process of transcription by saying that they omitted their own voices by leaving out the questions posed and made the narrative more coherent by putting it in chronological order and editing any

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<sup>18</sup>See Knud Kohn's review of Otto Rosenberg's reading, where he notes that in Rosenberg's two hour talk, he told his memories in 'freien Worten'. Kohn suggests that this was partly to do with wanting to give the audience a taste of Romani oral tradition but mostly because he was not happy with Enzensberger's transcription. Kohn writes 'ohne diese Bedenken spezifizieren zu wollen, streute er immer wieder Bemerkungen wie "Das, was ich jetzt erzähle, kommt in dem Buch nicht so gut raus" ein'. Knud Kohn, 'Von Marzahn nach Auschwitz', *tip Magazin*, 1999.

<sup>19</sup>LaCapra, p 22.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 70.

repetitions.<sup>21</sup> These elements of repetition and un-ordered memory are ones characterised by LaCapra as the ‘acting out of trauma’.

Rosenberg’s position in society at the time that he decided to have his memories documented in the form of a narrative suggests ‘reinvestment in life’ in the form of coping with the ‘demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition’ that LaCapra emphasises as important in the process of mourning. I would argue that Rosenberg’s narrative can be interpreted as a crucial part of this ‘reinvestment in life’ and that his intention in writing the text demonstrates the investment he has made in his ‘social and civic life’, the political intention in providing documentary evidence for the persecution of the Romanies in the Holocaust. This involves accepting the norms of having historical documentation to back up the validity of these memories.<sup>22</sup> Intention is the crucial element of Rosenberg’s text and through his position as a well-known community leader and the incorporation of meticulous endnotes in his narrative, his intention is easier to identify than in the Romani accounts discussed previously in this thesis; for this reason, the substance of his account and what is subsequently written becomes of the utmost importance. The purpose of his account is clear: to tell the story, to have it written, documented and known; the importance of recognising the victimisation of Romanies in the Holocaust is at the core of its writing.

Rosenberg’s suggested dissatisfaction with the way that Enzensberger transcribed the narrative also indicates that there was perhaps an emotional investment at stake in the writing and presentation of Rosenberg’s memories that went beyond his main intention. It is useful to identify his principal experience of trauma at this point. Martin Wilkes, in his article reviewing *Das Brennglas* for *Der Tagesspiegel* in 1999, captures the question which Rosenberg ‘acts out’: ‘Bewegt wird Otto Rosenbergs Erzählung von der Frage “Warum habe ich überlebt?”’<sup>23</sup> Rosenberg’s principle traumatic experience is the loss of nearly his entire family in the concentration camps of the Third Reich and the ensuing secondary victimisation caused by the lack of response from the German government and public after the end of the war. His discussion of this principle trauma comes about halfway through the narrative, where he expresses a feeling of not wanting to be the one to have survived:

Wissen Sie, was mich eigentlich immer so nachdenklich macht: Warum habe ich überlebt? Ich kann mir selbst die Antwort darauf nicht geben. Die ganze Familie, alle meine Geschwister, alles was einem lieb und teuer war, kein Mensch hat die Möglichkeit gehabt zu überleben. Obwohl doch meine Brüder viel stärker und kräftiger waren als ich. Ich war doch der Kleinste! Ich kann das nicht begreifen. Man sagt: Jetzt hast du die Freiheit, freue dich darüber. Ich habe mich keineswegs so riesig freuen können, denn meine Geschwister fehlten mir, immer, bis heute.

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<sup>21</sup>Neumann and Zimmermann, ‘Editorischer Hinweis’ in Walter Winter, *WinterZeit*, p. 101. Of note here is the fact that, though they express the desire to remove their own voices, footnotes are also included in this text to give historical background.

<sup>22</sup>Compare with Martins-Heuß, ‘Reflections on the Collective Identity’, pp. 207-209.

<sup>23</sup>Martin Wilkes, ‘Die Schuld der Überlebenden’ in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 1 August 1999.

Wenn dann die Feiertage waren und die Leute haben gefeiert, oder die Leute saßen zusammen, dann kam das Innerliche und das Nervliche. Das war sehr schwer (*Brennglas*, p. 64).

What is evident in this passage is the sense of loss that is at the core of Rosenberg's traumatic experience. He speaks of the family he lost and who did not survive the horrors that he somehow managed to survive. Part of the cycle of trauma for Rosenberg is, then, the repeated posing of this question, as he indicates by saying 'ich kann das nicht begreifen'.<sup>24</sup> Whether capturing his memories in written form and working them out this way sought to end this constant questioning can only be a matter of speculation, but it certainly cannot be ruled out as a possibility. Rosenberg does, in this text, reveal a need to articulate his traumatic memories and to pose the question of why he survived; indeed, he tries to answer this question through his text, to fill, in some way, the void that the killing of his family members left by creating the center for Sinti and Roma in Berlin and Brandenburg and giving his life to a clear purpose. The text then is a manifestation of this purpose and a clear legacy that he can leave behind, hence his emotional investment in it.

Rosenberg illustrates the loss that defines his trauma through the form of the text and his chronological portrayal of his memories. He starts the narrative much as Franz begins *Zwischen Liebe und Hass* in that he presents life before Marzahn and the concentration camps as idyllic and peaceful, emphasising the importance of family. He writes:

Gegen Abend wurde Feuer gemacht, und da kamen dann die älteren Frauen zusammen und erzählten von früher viele, viele Geschichten von Verwandten und Verstorbenen. Oder alte Märchen, schön erfundene Geschichten, die aber mitunter auch böartig waren. Meine Großmutter wickelte mich, wenn sie so dasaß, immer in ihre Schürze, und ich konnte alles mitanhören, was erzählt wurde (*Brennglas*, p. 13).

This is one of the few brief glimpses the reader is offered of the life that the concentration camps destroyed. Like Franz, Rosenberg hereby shows the reader the kind of life that did characterise Romani existence before the camps and sets it in opposition to the non-Romani notion of Romani life as wild and care-free. He gives the reader a picture of his caring grandmother and remembers the women telling fairy tales or stories from the past about relatives. These memories emphasise what was lost and draw attention to the loss of his family and these stories. He also remembers how the women sold goods door to door or told fortunes during the day while the men wove baskets and made tables and chairs (*Brennglas*, p. 11). Rosenberg's portrayal of the lost world of childhood is brief; he does not give the reader a sense of the complexity of the life that was lived. The first few pages of the narrative serve to paint a simple, idyllic picture in order to drive home the destruction of that picture.

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<sup>24</sup>On the 'cycle of trauma' see LaCapra, p. 21.



When he describes being taken away in 1936, Rosenberg evokes the sense of betrayal he felt at being uprooted from his home and kicked out by people that he knew and who had been familiar to him:

‘Los, anziehen! Schnell! Schnell!’ Holterdipolter. Unsere Polizisten, die wir vom Sehen kannten, waren auch dabei. Wir wurden auf Lastwagen geladen. Unser Planwagen wurde ebenfalls mitgenommen. Wir wußten nicht, woher die Leute das Recht hatten, uns von einem Privatplatz wegzunehmen (*Brennglas*, p. 18).

In this passage, Rosenberg’s confusion and sense of betrayal is immediately apparent. His mention of ‘unsere Polizisten’ conveys his inability to understand why anyone had the right to take him and his family away from their home; this shows his confusion at being betrayed by the police who had always been known to his family and in whom he and others had put faith in being there to protect them rather than to do them harm. In this way, he underlines his status as a German citizen, the police are also ‘his police’, and they should be there to protect him and his family. Rosenberg’s use of the term ‘das Recht’ here also reminds the reader of the political purpose of the writer concerned with the rights of his people. The spoken quality of this particular passage strikingly evokes the image of Rosenberg telling his story and lends to the urgency of realising the rights which have been wronged. After the confusion at his family’s uprooting from home, the stinking ‘Rieselfelder’ of Marzahn stands in stark contrast to the idyllic scenes that came before and brings the reader close to the loss experienced by Rosenberg at the center of this narrative: the loss of home, a way of life and any respect by being cast away alongside the city’s sewage.

For Rosenberg and many Romanies, official compensation for their suffering came very late or not at all.<sup>25</sup> Initially all Romanies were excluded from postwar restitution legislation and its implementation, then only those who were interned after Himmler’s ‘Auschwitz-Erlass’ of 1943 were given compensation.<sup>26</sup> Milton points out that this date was later changed to 1938, but that even this date ‘excluded restitution for incarceration in early internment camps such as Marzahn or Lackenbach’.<sup>27</sup> Rosenberg himself was one of the first prisoners in Marzahn and so could be said to have a personal stake in the bureaucratic and legal discriminations, which continued to exclude certain prisoners from any claim to restitution. Despite Rosenberg’s intention to make it clear that Romanies were victims of the Holocaust not because they were in fact ‘asocial and criminal’ in line with the National Socialist label used as a reason to intern them, he expresses little resentment in his text. As discussed in previous chapters in reference to Franz, Ceija and Karl Stojka and Alfred Lessing, many Romani memories of the Holocaust are characterised by their recollection of moments of connection with non-Romanies, mostly

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<sup>25</sup>Sybil Milton, ‘Sinti and Roma in Twentieth Century Austria and Germany’, *German Studies Review*, 23 2, (2002), 317-331. Here pp. 323-324. See also Margalit, pp. 117-154 for a detailed history of the official recognition of Romanies as victims of National Socialism specifically between 1945-1953.

<sup>26</sup>Margalit, pp. 161-182.

<sup>27</sup>Milton, ‘Sinti and Roma in Twentieth Century Austria and Germany’, p. 324.

German and Austrian.

Overall, there is a distinct lack of a open resentment towards the perpetrators of the Holocaust in Romani writing; as I have discussed in other chapters, there is evidence of resentment in this writing, but it is expressed with caution. The Romani writers discussed in this thesis all remember and voice the cruelties which they or their relatives endured in the concentration camps and in their home countries, but they also make a point to emphasise understanding and connection by recalling the kindnesses received from Germans and Austrians. Rosenberg remembers a woman who gave him a glass of milk when he was taken to do construction work at the *Zivilmeister's* house near Ellrich: 'Das war, wie wenn der Himmel die große Sonne scheinen läßt, und es regnet Mairegen – so ähnlich war das, so eine Freude: Ach es gibt doch noch gute Menschen!' (*Brennglas*, p. 94). With passages such as this one, Rosenberg highlights moments of connection with *Gadje* and the kindnesses that he received from them, emphasising that there were still good people. Like Franz, Rosenberg questions how anyone could have committed such crimes:

Niemand weiß, warum Menschen so sein können. Auch wenn ich einen Befehl habe, muß ich ihn nicht ausführen, nicht so kraß. [...] Und ich meine, es gab sehr viele deutsche Soldaten, die auch gut waren. Aber die meisten von ihnen waren schlecht. Die meisten waren schlecht. Ich hatte vorher, wenn ich unsere Soldaten sah, im Bus oder in der Bahn, immer zu ihnen aufgeschaut (*Brennglas*, p. 98).

His emphasis on the many good German soldiers he had looked up to before suggests that these soldiers had perhaps been somehow corrupted.

Rosenberg does indicate fear of the terror happening again in his text, but he is able to see the importance of his memories for the future and does not come across in the text as being caught in a cycle of trauma. Améry writes that

wer seine Individualität aufgehen läßt in der Gesellschaft und sich nur als Funktion des Sozialen verstehen kann, der Stumpffühlig und Indifferente also, vergibt in der Tat. Er läßt das Geschehene gelassen sein, was es war. Er läßt, wie das Volk sagt, die Zeit seine Wunden heilen.<sup>28</sup>

Rosenberg, in choosing to break his silence and to tell of his experiences, is not remaining indifferent and expresses through his writing a degree of the 'Ressentiment' that Améry describes. There was a long delay in Germany in the recognition of Romanies as victims and, as Milton has pointed out, 'the Germans attempted to minimize these crimes by finding rationalizations in the supposedly asocial danger represented by this small minority'.<sup>29</sup> Rosenberg remembers the difficulty of returning to Berlin and dealing with the authorities there:

Sie wollten von mir eine Geburtsurkunde nachdem mir alle meine Papiere doch abgenommen waren! Und in einem Ton! Wir waren doch noch dermaßen eingeschüchtert,

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<sup>28</sup> Améry, p. 114.

<sup>29</sup> Milton, 'Sinti and Roma in Twentieth Century Austria and Germany', p. 323.

daß wir sagten, bloß den Mund halten, die haben hier ja immer noch das Sagen  
(*Brennglas*, p. 116).

In writing *Das Brennglas*, Rosenberg disrupts the act of forgetting and the silence surrounding the Romani Holocaust and forces it into German discourse about the Holocaust.

In Rosenberg's case, it is difficult to say whether the recording of his memories was able to provide the therapeutic act of release from trauma, but it allows him to voice his experiences, and the transcription of his oral narrative provides him with the opportunity to communicate his memories to a larger audience than he could reach by recounting them in an auditorium. The text serves for Rosenberg as a way of knowing that a coherent communication of these memories has the ability to provide a written record; in this way he provides non-Romani society with the written documentation which is necessary for Gadge understanding of history as true, official and factual. Therefore, the written narrative of his memories is offered as an informative text for non-Romanies. He provides his account in dialogue with a non-Romani writer and marks his story as Romani through his own memories, but the ultimate communication with the public occurs in the written form. Rosenberg's text therefore can be seen to represent the struggle between Romani and German identities, which was also particularly evident in Lessing's texts, and can also be seen as an attempt to work with these two identifications through dialogue. Rosenberg's focus on his traumatic memories of Marzahn and the concentration camps could be seen as maintaining perpetual victim status in the view of the 'outsiders', but I would argue that there is more at stake in this writing.

Améry describes his concept of 'Ressentiment' as a way of instilling insecurity and self doubt in those who were responsible for the crimes of the Third Reich:

Gestachelt von den Sporen unseres Ressentiments allein – und nicht im mindesten durch eine subjektiv geschichtsfeindliche Versöhnlichkeit –, würde das deutsche Volk empfindlich dafür bleiben, daß es ein Stück seiner nationalen Geschichte nicht von der Zeit neutralisieren lassen darf, sondern es zu integrieren hat.<sup>30</sup>

Rosenberg's narrative could be said to contain this goading of resentment in that it forces his readers to learn what happened and to know that compensation for and recognition of these events was severely lacking. He remembers the feeling of resentment he experienced immediately after the war when he seeks shelter at a German farmhouse:

Als ich dorthinkam, war ich voller Haß gewesen und hatte den Vorsatz zu töten. Alle Leute umzubringen, nicht nur die, die uns im Lager gequält hatten: Ihr habt uns als Deutsche nicht akzeptiert und wenn wir jetzt rauskommen, dann werden wir euch Deutsche auch totmachen (*Brennglas*, p. 109).

However, he makes a point to emphasise that after meeting the woman and children who lived there and experiencing their kindness and hospitality, this anger and hatred subsided.

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<sup>30</sup>Améry, p. 124.

He describes the experience of staying in that farmhouse and releasing that raw anger as ‘auschlaggebend’. His text boldly demands to be ‘integrated’ in German national history and, through Rosenberg’s fear that Auschwitz could happen again, it seeks to arouse self-mistrust in its readers. The acknowledgement of the Gadge’s need for written history in order to recognise a historical experience of a group spurs the writing of this account; by allowing Rosenberg to articulate his trauma, it marks an end to his silent suffering under the weight of memories.

Marianne Rosenberg remembers that her father forbade her to tell anyone of her Romani background and what he had gone through as he worried it would hinder her career.<sup>31</sup> His long refusal to confront the past and to acknowledge what he went through and his subsequent reluctance to publicly acknowledge himself and his family as German Sinti reveal the significance of the articulation and publication of this narrative. It can be said, then, that Rosenberg’s narrative looks more to the future than it does to the past. Jean Améry, however, argues that resentment blocks the way to a future, saying that

es nagelt jeden von uns fest ans Kreuz seiner zerstörten Vergangenheit. Absurd fordert es, das Irreversible solle umgekehrt, das Ereignis unereignet gemacht werden. Das Ressentiment blockiert den Ausgang in die eigentlich menschliche Dimension, die Zukunft. Ich weiß, das Zeitgefühl des im Ressentiment Gefangenen ist verdreht, ver-rückt, wenn man will, denn es verlangt nach dem zweifach unmöglichen, dem Rückgang ins Abgelebte und der Aufhebung dessen, was geschah.<sup>32</sup>

Although Rosenberg does, in a sense, nail himself to ‘the cross of his ruined past’ by revealing his identity as a German Sinto and telling his memories of trauma, identifying himself as a victim, the text also provides him with an exit towards the future, rather than blocking it off. This idea of blocking of the future is reminiscent of LaCapra’s concept of the ‘founding trauma’ where victimhood can become the building ground for a new group identity based on that status of a victim.<sup>33</sup> LaCapra discusses the blurring of past and future in recalling traumatic events, remarking that ‘in post-traumatic situations in which one relives (or acts out) the past, distinctions tend to collapse, including the crucial distinction between then and now wherein one is able to remember what happened to one in the past but realises one is living in the here and now with future possibilities’.<sup>34</sup> I would argue that Rosenberg works through his traumatic memories in this text by making his political intentions and the importance of collective memory central in it. He places his own future and the future of Romanies in Germany at the center of his text, by making it clear that he is writing in order to achieve recognition for the horrors they faced as Romanies in the Holocaust in order to be able to live without threat in Germany. Paul Celan said, in reference to his writing of ‘Todesfuge’, ‘es war der Versuch, Richtung zu

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<sup>31</sup>Marianne Rosenberg, *Kokolores*, p. 125.

<sup>32</sup>Améry, p. 110.

<sup>33</sup>LaCapra, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 22.

gewinnen'.<sup>35</sup> I think that this idea of trying to achieve direction can be applied to Rosenberg's work as he uses his memories to provide a direction for the future. Indeed, Rosenberg has inscribed his own individual history into that of Germany, establishing himself and his people as past and future residents of the country.

Like Karl Stojka, Rosenberg remembers that there was little sense of 'Zusammenhalt' in the concentration camps: 'Den gab es bei den Sinti nicht, bei den Roma nicht, bei Juden nicht' (*Brennglas*, p. 91). Here again, it is noteworthy that he underlines the differences between the Romani groups, separating Sinti and Roma in his list as different groups. Like Lessing and Franz, he makes his individual identification of himself as a Sinto clear throughout the text, but also makes clear his purpose of drawing attention to the persecution of the various Romani groups in Third Reich. He remembers that it was important to stay healthy and to survive as an individual in the camps and not to show signs of weakness:

Wer geschlagen wurde, war schon gezeichnet. Wer ausgemergelt war, wem der Tod aus den Augen sah, rief bei denen die er bediente, eine solche Aggression hervor, daß er immer noch mehr geprügelt wurde, bis er dann eines Tages tot war. So einer hatte keine Chance. Chancen hatte nur, wer nicht krank wurde, wer zum Arbeit taugte. Es hieß ja, 'Arbeit macht frei!' (*Brennglas*, p. 63)

The scenes that Rosenberg describes within the camps among the prisoners is different from Ceija Stojka's portrayal of the togetherness and mutual caring she experienced. Rosenberg's experiences echo Karl Stojka's memories of everyone in the camps relying only on themselves for their own survival. Like Karl Stojka, he emphasises how the concentration camps were designed to destroy identity and to rip apart families: 'Die Politik der Lagerleitung ging dahin, die Familien auseinanderzureißen, zu entzweien. Am Ende gab es nur noch das an sich selbst, nicht mehr an andere Denken. Da kam es dann vor, daß der Vater das Brot für das Kind aufaß' (*Brennglas*, p. 67). While Rosenberg's voice does have a child-like narrative quality, he maintains a critical view and points out to the reader facts about the way the concentration camps worked and were run, such as can be seen here in his reference to 'die Politik der Lagerleitung'.

He recalls moments of humiliation and those practices in the camps that were specifically difficult because they violated Romani cultural codes and traditions. The fact that Romanies were together in the family camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau was not seen as a blessing because according to Romani traditions, females and males maintain separate lives and the mixing of the two can be seen as contamination; men's exposure and close proximity to women in childbirth and who were menstruating was seen as taboo.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Rosenhaft highlights that

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<sup>35</sup>Paul Celan, 'Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der Freien Hansestadt Bremen' (1958), in *Deutsche Literature seit 1945*, ed. Volker Bohn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 143-145. Here, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup>Martins-Heuß, 'Reflections on Collective Identity' p. 207. See also Reemtsma, p. 62.

survival in Auschwitz-Birkenau depended on acquiescing in and taking advantage of structures and systems that demanded the abandonment of everyday ethical standards. In the case of the Gypsy camp, this meant participating in a system which, while keeping families together, enforced daily reversals in the order of authority between the sexes and the generations and savage affronts to the customary practices on which family life – the survival of the family as a moral unit — was based.<sup>37</sup>

Rosenberg remembers how in Auschwitz his grandmother would cower behind the smaller children so that he would not see her naked when they were all forced inside the ‘Sauna’. He writes, ‘Frauen mit ihren großen Söhnen und Männer, nackt vor ihren Töchtern — eine größere Pein kann es nicht geben’ (*Brennglas*, p. 60).

The texts discussed in this thesis generally adhere to maintaining two separate spheres between men and women, revealing little interaction with the opposite sex. Rosenberg however does mention, as a reason for the failure of the first planned liquidation of the *Zigeunerlager*, that the ‘Blockältesten und Kapos ja mit unseren Frauen Verhältnisse [hatten]. Da wurden auch Kinder geboren (*Brennglas*, p. 79)’. Further, he writes that the SS abused the women from the *Zigeunerlager*, ‘nicht direkt im Block, sondern meistens hinter dem Block oder woanders, und anschließend haben sie sie erschossen’ (*Brennglas*, p. 75). These humiliations that women experienced and their family members witnessed were particularly difficult for the social structure of Romani families.<sup>38</sup> Rosenberg remembers the humiliation of the experience of being in such cramped conditions in the camps:

in dieser einen Stunde mußte man auch die Toilette benutzen, eine Baracke, in deren Mitte versetzte Betonlöcher waren. Man hat sich gegenüber, nebeneinander [...] Die meisten waren krank. Das war so furchtbar. Hier wurde eines der größten Tabus gebrochen. Es war kein normales Austreten, sondern eine Qual und Beleidigung unserer Menschen (*Brennglas*, p. 60).

In addition, he recalls the humiliation and horror of this experience of being confronted with excrement, the forbidden crossing of the inner body and outer body that violates codes of ritual purity in Romani cultures.<sup>39</sup> Words appear to fail him when describing the close proximity with others in using the toilet. This in itself addresses the humiliation and contamination involved with the lower half of the body. He addresses this further when he remembers that ‘man hat uns alle Haare abgeschoren, auch unter den Armen, und auch die Schamhaare. Dieselbe Scheren wurden auch benutzt, um den Kopf zu scheren, den Bart. Das sind Dinge, die auch heute, wenn man darüber spricht, noch sehr weh tun’ (*Brennglas*, p. 60). In this passage, Rosenberg identifies these humiliations as particularly painful memories, highlighting their specific injury to him as a member of the Romani community. On another occasion, he remembers standing

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<sup>37</sup>Rosenhaft, ‘The Gypsy’s Revenge’, p. 411.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. See also Martins-Heuß, ‘Reflections on Collective Identity’, pp. 207-209.

<sup>39</sup>cf. Martins-Heuß, ‘Reflections on Collective Identity’, p. 204 and Reemtsma, p. 62.

up for himself by refusing to clean up the mess SS officers left behind when they had spent the night with some women in one of the barracks. He remembers: 'Da gab es natürlich auch unangenehme Sachen, Sauereien wegzuräumen. Das verbot aber mein Gesetz. Und da sagte ich: "Das mache ich nicht"' (*Brennglas*, p. 52). Rosenberg makes a point to emphasise the specific injury to Romani cultural traditions that these humiliations in the camps involved.

It is interesting to consider this writing about trauma and history in reference to collective memory and identity. As Slawomir Kapralski remarks on the importance of memory for Eastern European Roma,

it is a bitter paradox that the very same factor that helps build Roma identity — the collective memory of attempted genocide — becomes a reason to deny it. It only emphasises the significance of that memory in the contemporary context and the extent to which it is a living memory with continuous reference to the present.<sup>40</sup>

Although Kapralski focuses primarily on the case of eastern European Roma, many of his points regarding collective memory can be applied to German and Austrian Romanies. Rosenberg's initial silence illustrates a lack of tradition for the communication of traumatic Holocaust memories; this emphasises its impact as a living memory or as 'the threat of Auschwitz', which will be discussed in further detail with reference to Stefan Horvath's work.<sup>41</sup> Rosenberg confronts this threat as well as the impact of his bottled up memories by agreeing to have them recorded in written form. For him, the breaking of silence through telling his memories to someone who will write them down constitutes the 'working through' of trauma as described by LaCapra as an 'articulatory practice.' Martins-Heuß has noted that Romani collective identity did not collapse completely after the Third Reich and suggested that it was indeed suspended, pointing out that in terms of ritual purity, where all Romanies were subject to conditions in the camps that were ritually polluted, 'each and every adult Gypsy survivor had lost his or her honor'.<sup>42</sup> She goes on to suggest that silence was the only way of restoring this honour in Romani communities, underlining the fact that this threat to their system of norms and law had to be suspended.<sup>43</sup> It is interesting then, that the Romani Rights movement is based on the collective remembering of these experiences and has gathered force since these memories have been made public.<sup>44</sup> The shame associated with this loss of honour and the fact that it would be a source of further shame to speak of the conditions and compromising situations which were endured in the camps make Rosenberg's step forward more noteworthy.

Interesting in the concept of a 'collective memory', which this narrative attempts to contribute to, is the fact that for Romanies in Europe, for the Roma and Sinti groups in Germany,

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<sup>40</sup>Kapralski, p. 212.

<sup>41</sup>Brenda L. Bethman, "'My Characters Live only insofar as they Speak". Interview with Elfriede Jelinek', *Women in German Yearbook*, 16 (2000), 61-72. Here, p. 63. See chapter 5 for a discussion of Elfriede Jelinek's statement in light of Stefan Horvath's work.

<sup>42</sup>Martins-Heuß, 'Reflections on Collective Identity', p. 207.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 208.

<sup>44</sup>Reemtsma, pp. 136-144.

the idea of being a collective group at all is relatively recent. Kapralski writes of the importance of the experiences of the Holocaust in creating a drive to become a collective group, saying that

in general, the consolidating function of memory is widely recognised among Roma elites in central and eastern Europe. Collective memory has, for instance, been explicitly mentioned as equivalent to having a state: 'Of course, we remember [the extermination] and we will remember', said a Roma from Moscow. 'You know, we do not have our statehood, and the only things which hold us together are our memories and our traditions'.<sup>45</sup>

This statement echoes Karl Stojka's comment in his narrative, which emphasised the importance of traditions and ways of life as Romani cultural identity and adds the memory of shared experience.<sup>46</sup> I would argue that despite the fact that Rosenberg, like Philomena Franz, emphasises his identity as belonging to the German Sinti, he attempts to make a contribution to Romani collective memory in his narrative in order to establish a broader level of group identity. Although he is very specific about referring to his family as Sinti, he includes the Roma in the same victim group. He says of Marzahn: 'Bald lebten zirka 900 bis 1000 Menschen im Lager Marzahn, nicht nur Sinti, sondern auch viele Roma' (*Brennglas*, p. 31). Here again Rosenberg distinguishes between the different groups of Romanies; memory has become the method for uniting the different groups in Europe and, although this concept faces many problems at the level of the people, Roma activists have tried to propel the force of the memory of the Holocaust as a shared experience which allows them to have common roots.

Rosenberg is careful to maintain the distinction between the two groups in reference to his individual identity as he goes on to say 'unter den Sinti waren sehr viele Onkel und Tanten von mir und weitere Verwandte...' (*Brennglas*, p. 31). However, his allusion to the presence of the Roma marks the beginning of a shared experience which occurs in the internment camp of Marzahn; the reader is alerted to the fact that these are separate groups of people, but from that point onwards the experience is shared and a new common ground is established. This also gives a specific role to the survivor in creating a new 'state' of life and a new identity which takes root after the Holocaust; surviving Romanies and the following generations are part of this new identity in remembering the ones who were lost.<sup>47</sup> The idea of 'collective memory' as being the equivalent to having a state is perhaps not Rosenberg's objective in the sense that he wants to transcend the place that he is from. He, like all the other authors discussed so far, has a very strong connection to his homeland and expresses the wish not to leave it. Rather, he wants to use this memory to create a safe place for Romanies in Germany. Again, Aleida

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<sup>45</sup>Kapralski, p. 212. See also Bengsch, pp. 54-60 on the idea of Romani collective memory and cultural activity (literature) providing a sense of 'national identity'.

<sup>46</sup>Karl Stojka, *Zuhause*, p. 115.

<sup>47</sup>Kapralski, pp. 208-211. Kapralski highlights a new emphasis on 'political nationalism', which encourages Romanies across Europe to engage in political organization and to participate in political life; he points out that within the context of this effort the Romani Holocaust 'creates a chronological linearity of Romani history, dividing it into periods "before" and "after" (p. 211).



Assmann's concept of inscribing one's own stories and histories into the wider history of the land is useful here. The danger of this inscription presents itself in the danger of basing identity on the status of being victims. Kapralski warns that 'the struggle to win the Roma a place in the landscape of suffering turns out to be an attempt to change their status from that of outsiders to European history and culture to that of one of its main victims'.<sup>48</sup> This is a very present risk in the new identity gained from a new sense of 'collective memory', and it is necessary to look at Rosenberg's text in terms of LaCapra's warning of the 'founding trauma' which can be 'the valorised or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or group'.<sup>49</sup>

Rosenhaft expresses concern for the decision to suppress Rosenberg's status as an activist in the text, letting the reader hear the voice of a child victim. She writes: 'In Rosenberg's story, the central character — the memoirist — is pre-eminently a victim, the fact of survival and any success in the post-war period more grudgingly than triumphantly recorded, since the story is conceived as an indictment'.<sup>50</sup> While I agree that Rosenberg's position as a community leader and his role in drawing attention to the victimisation of the Sinti and Roma in the Holocaust as a political activist is suppressed in the narrative voice of the text which ultimately has the non-Romani mediator communicate and order his memories, I would argue that Rosenberg's voicing of his experiences and his portrayal of himself as a hero in the narrative reveals him to be a survivor and activist. In the narrative, he tells with pride of his family's role in Berlin before Marzahn, 'Die Rosenbergs führten die Verhandlungen mit den Behörden und wurden gefragt, wenn man etwas wissen wollte. Mein Großvater stellte Schriftstücke aus' (*Brennglas*, p. 11). This role of leadership within his community is similar to the role he would later play in Berlin as the director of the *Landesverband der Sinti und Roma*. Additionally, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, Rosenberg is the central character of the story and though he is in the position of the victim, the reader is given the impression of a survivor, a boy who is the hero of this particular story. He writes of a particular incident in Buchenwald when a hydrant had to be turned on in the winter because of the icy cold:

'Wer macht das?' Otto hat sich wieder gemeldet. Ich stieg die Eisensprossen hinunter in den tiefen, viereckigen Schacht, schlug das Eis auf und machte den Hydranten frei (*Brennglas*, p. 90).

There are a few incidents like this mentioned in the text where Otto Rosenberg is very much the survivor of the story, owing it only to himself that he survives. This seems especially remarkable when considering how young he was at the time. At one point he explicitly attributes his survival to being alone after all of his relatives had died in the liquidation of the *Zigeunerlager* in Birkenau. He remarks, 'so brauchte ich auf niemanden Rücksicht zu nehmen. Was ich tun wollte, das habe ich selbst entschieden und habe es auch getan. Das war ein Grund, warum ich

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<sup>48</sup>Kapralski, p. 215.

<sup>49</sup>LaCapra, p. 23.

<sup>50</sup>Rosenhaft, 'The Photographer and his "Victims"', p. 180.

überlebt habe' (*Brennglas*, p. 81). Though Rosenberg describes himself and other Romanies as victims in the camps, detailing the humiliating conditions and the group he belongs to as victims, he narrates the experiences of an individual survivor.

Remarkable in Rosenberg's text is also his assertion of himself as 'ein Berliner Sinto' which is stressed in the introduction written by Klaus Schütz where he writes 'in diesem Buch erzählt ein Berliner Sinto sein Leben' (*Brennglas*, p. 5). Here, as with the narratives previously discussed in this thesis, the reader gains a clear sense of belonging to his home country, Germany. The statement at the beginning of the book identifying himself as a 'Berliner Sinto' echoes the strong assertion of identification with Romani identity and their home countries discussed in reference to Franz, Lessing, Ceija Stojka. The authors' clear definition of themselves as Sinti and as German seems to be vital in these texts. Similarly to the other writers discussed, Otto Rosenberg did not consider leaving Germany after being liberated from the concentration camp. Marianne Rosenberg reports of her father's struggle to regain his German citizenship after the war.

Mein Vater war, wie auch seine Familie, immer deutscher Staatsbürger. In den fünfziger Jahren zog er bis vor ein Landgericht, weil man ihm die Staatsbürgerschaft nicht wiedergeben wollte. "Zigeuner, Wandertrieb, hat keine Bindung an die Stadt Berlin", hieß es. Er kämpfte darum und erhielt sie zurück (*Brennglas*, p. 29).

Rosenberg's sense of German identity comes across strongly in his regional identification with Berlin and his use of language. Unlike the Stojkas, he does not discuss the Romani language in his text or give any examples of words in Romani. His immediate return to Berlin after being released from the camps and his choice to stay there for the rest of his life comes across strongly in his own narrative and is further echoed in Marianne Rosenberg's autobiography where Berlin also has a strong presence.<sup>51</sup>

### 5.3.2 Genre

As previously mentioned, Otto Rosenberg uses the voice of himself as a child to narrate his memories. This could be indicative of an 'acting out' of trauma, a reliving of the past which might consequently enable him to work through the experiences he recalls. In *Kokolores*, Marianne Rosenberg remembers how her father would use a childlike tone while telling his memories:

Wenn mein Vater das Gerät, das seine Stimme festhält, vergisst, ist er wieder das Kind. Das Kind, das im Rüstungsbetriebe, in den es gesteckt worden war mit dem Brennglas zündelte, das es entdeckt und abgeschraubt hatte, und daraufhin wegen Sabotage nach Moabit ins Gefängnis gebracht worden (*Kokolores*, p. 4).

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<sup>51</sup>As with the other authors discussed so far, it is noteworthy that there was little other option but for Romanies to return to their home countries and look for their families. See Rosenhaft, 'The Gypsy's Revenge', p. 408 and Milton, 'Persecuting the Survivors', pp. 36-37.

Marianne Rosenberg describes herself here as a witness to her father's transformation back into the child who experienced the horrors of that time and what she sees would speak more for the authentic voice of child being recorded, an 'acting out' of the trauma which is then recorded by Ulrich Enzensberger.

However, it is important to look closely at the function of the child's voice as a narrator in this text for the reasons previously mentioned and its transcription by a non-Romani writer. The child's narrative voice is robbed of its authority through its being surrounded and 'validated' through the footnotes provided to offer the reader documentary historical evidence beyond the voice of the child. The infiltration of these notes into the memories of these experiences gives the impression that Rosenberg's story cannot stand on its own, whether or not the choice to use these was Rosenberg's or Enzensberger's. Given Rosenberg's prominent position as the founder and chair of the *Landesverband der Deutschen Sinti und Roma in Berlin und Brandenburg*, it would seem that if the intention were to provide documentary evidence where the focus of the reader's attention should be on content, ie. where and when what happened, Rosenberg's voice should be authoritative enough to provide his memories and the historical evidence to back it up in his narrative. The narrative as it is presented in *Das Brennglas*, I would argue, exhibits signs of the insecurity in writing which has also suggested itself in other Romani writing.

The possibility exists that the choice to present Otto Rosenberg's narrative voice as the child there and then in the moment, acting out the trauma, may also have been the safer choice in the effort to break with racist tradition that regards the Sinti and Roma as asocial, as was the case under National Socialism.<sup>52</sup> When Rosenberg's narrative was published, Ceija Stojka's *Wir leben im Verborgenen* had already been in the public domain for ten years and was arguably the best known of any Holocaust narratives because of her use of the child's narrative voice. Nicholas Stargardt, in his study on children in the Second World War, draws attention to

the deep bedrock of common sense and common prejudice upon which welfare experts, doctors, religious charities and local administrators built their version of the Nazi state. They knew that most people would support them in their fight against juvenile disorder. In a period of full employment, the 'work-shy' and the 'asocial' had broken the social contract.<sup>53</sup>

Considering that the Sinti and Roma were branded as 'asocial' and 'work-shy' by the racist policies of the Nazi regime,<sup>54</sup> Rosenberg would not want to eliminate any possible way others might see him / read him according to these terms. As a child and as a victim, the victim's story can evoke no sense of the criminal. This is especially relevant because, as Stargardt observes, 'as late as the 1980s, surveys of public opinion found that the punitive measures taken against

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<sup>52</sup>On the history of the term 'Asozialität' in relation to 'Zigeuner' in Germany, see Margalit, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup>Stargardt, Nicholas. *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Random House, 2005). Here, p. 78.

<sup>54</sup>See Zimmermann, 'The National Socialist "Solution of the Gypsy Question"', p. 414.

so-called “asocial” elements were recollected as a popular and positive side of Nazism’.<sup>55</sup> In a country where he has warned his family that ‘man nie so genau wisse, ob es nicht doch wieder so kommen könne, dass sie uns einsperren, in Viehwagen, und uns fortbrächten (*Brennglas*, p. 53)’, Rosenberg does not want to risk confirming the long-held belief that Romanies were interned because of their criminal, asocial behavior and therefore was somehow justified. Given the intended readership of his narrative and the political intentions of the book, the child’s narrative voice must be viewed critically with a reflection on its readership. Perhaps it is, for this reason, a sign of insecurity in writing. In an environment where Romanies are still very much the objects of prejudice and for whom the official recognition of their victimisation in the Holocaust at the official level has been late and grudging, a tentative balance is evident in Romani accounts concerning what is acceptable to write about and how it will reflect on their new collective community.

Dori Laub discusses the importance of the witness to testimony, a topic which is of particular interest here in light of the fact that Otto Rosenberg’s text was recorded and transcribed. Laub writes of the sensitivity needed saying that

the emergence of the narrative which is being listened to — and heard — is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the ‘knowing’ of the event is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time.<sup>56</sup>

The suggestion that he was not happy with the way his memories were transcribed by Enzensberger may indicate that there was a problem in the sharing of this ‘creation of knowledge’ and that Rosenberg would have liked to have filled the blank page on his own. His telling of his story to Ulrich Enzensberger and the inclusion of footnotes and historical evidence suggests an urgency to provide documentation of the victimisation of the Romanies in the Holocaust. In the post-war trials and the thousands of pages of evidence very little mention was given to the Romanies.<sup>57</sup> Certain aspects of Rosenberg’s narrative lend a personal and eye-witness voice to events described in history books. For example, the uprising in Birkenau is described by Rosenberg in *Das Brennglas* and seems to be an important event to bear witness to, to corroborate that it did really happen and that Romanies played a part in it. This particular memory is a heroic one, showing the reader that Romanies did have the courage and the strength to resist the first time the Nazis attempted to liquidate the camp. Rosenberg’s text can therefore not only be seen as documentary, but as an emotional investment in remembering the Romani victims of the Holocaust. Tony Kushner points to the sensitivity of the documents written by Jewish

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Laub, ‘Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening’, in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (NY and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 57-74. Here, p. 57.

<sup>57</sup>Kushner, p. 30.

Holocaust victims themselves in that they are written by people who may not otherwise have been writers and so ‘on the one hand, such writings were undoubtedly a form of resistance in the light of the Nazis’ determination to destroy not only the Jewish world but also all evidence of the destruction process. On the other, they were deeply personal and individualised’.<sup>58</sup> Rosenberg’s text struggles with this dual intention of documentation and of providing a personal narrative. He clearly wants to highlight the historical events that he recalls but cannot deny the deeply personal and individual within his memories.

In this way, Rosenberg’s *Das Brennglas* also tests genre boundaries in testimony. Dori Laub describes the ‘bursting open of the frame of Auschwitz’ and testifying to the unbelievability of experiencing the Holocaust.<sup>59</sup> *Das Brennglas* could be seen as undertaking this aim, testifying to an experience that might have been overlooked and swept aside if there weren’t the voices now recalling these memories. Rosenberg’s text may not be a bold testing of the boundaries of how to tell of these experiences, rather a cautious one, but perhaps this caution was necessary for him. Kushner warns that the ‘Holocaust was not experienced by its victims as the coherent narrative in which it is now increasingly packaged’.<sup>60</sup> Rosenberg’s account could be said to be packaged in this way with its coherent narrative, the footnotes which offer historical evidence and clarification to the narrative and the extra sources listed in the back. I would argue, though, that the decision to present the narrative in this way shows the conflicting elements of collective non-Romani memory and individual Romani memory. Because it is obvious that Rosenberg’s experience has been filtered through another voice, and been presented alongside evidence, it does show an insecurity in his presentation of his memories but it also illustrates the difficulty in voicing trauma.

## 5.4 Marianne Rosenberg and *Kokolores*

### 5.4.1 Writing Silence: Marking Generational Trauma

Kapralski raises the issue of silence and memory in Romani communities who for so long did not communicate their experiences of victimisation in the Holocaust. He writes:

Even in those Romani communities in which knowledge of Auschwitz is more detailed and whose members more frequently participate in organised commemorative visits to Auschwitz — that is, for instance, those in Hungary or in the Czech Republic — no pattern of communicating memory of the sufferings of the war has been elaborated, even within families. Sometimes it is only recently that the silence has been broken and the younger generation of Roma have learned that their relatives were victims of Nazi persecutions. In such a situation it is difficult to speak of a communication between family memory and generalised knowledge,

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>59</sup>Laub, ‘Bearing Witness’, p. 62.

<sup>60</sup>Kushner, p. 50.

even when the latter has been supported by the recognition of the symbolic or 'political' importance of commemorative ceremonies.<sup>61</sup>

The idea of a 'pattern of communicating memory' in Romani families is interesting to consider in terms of the scarcity of second-generation texts in Romani communities in Germany and Austria. Karl Stojka has emphasised his sorrow at the lack of Romani tradition and culture passed on to his children in Austria and through his writing and artwork, attempts to draw attention to the loss of Romani tradition and language. Marianne Rosenberg's *Kokolores* offers a unique opportunity to explore the effects of her father's traumatic memories on her own life and her work. In this text, she clearly 'marks' the way the Holocaust has been a part of her life.

Although Marianne Rosenberg's book has the characteristics of a typical celebrity autobiography, highlighting the successes and disappointments of her career, the presence of her father and the vague knowledge of what he experienced is strong throughout the narrative. In the smallest incidents that she recalls from her childhood, the knowledge of what her ancestors suffered lurks persistently. For example she recalls that

ausreichend zu essen hatten wir immer. Aber ich sorgte mich wenn ich nicht aufaß, und versteckte die Brote, die ich nicht mehr mochte, in den Ofenecken und auf dem Fensterbrett. Natürlich mit schlechtem Gewissen, denn ich wusste, dass die kleinen Kinder im Lager froh gewesen wären, wenn sie nur einen Bissen von dem, was ich essen konnte, gehabt hätten (*Kokolores*, p. 21).

Though many children might have memories of guiltily hiding food they don't want to eat, the presence of her father at the table and of his first-hand experience of the starving children in the concentration camps makes the experience take on a different significance for Marianne Rosenberg. For her it is not an abstract image of hungry, poverty-stricken children in a foreign country where she has never visited, but rather the image of her own father as a child, starving in an abstract place full of horrors she cannot imagine.

Marianne Rosenberg acknowledges that she and her family pieced together a vague idea of her father's experiences in the camps through what he told them over the years, but she does not try to reconstruct his memories or to fill in the missing gaps in his memory within the text of *Kokolores*. Consistently throughout her autobiography, silence surrounds the traumatic loss of her family members who perished in the concentration camps and, similarly to the way her father communicated his memories to his family, she gives the reader brief pieces of information within her account of her musical career. Her text does, however, display characteristics of 'post-memory', Marianne Hirsch's term for the politics of memory in second-generation Jewish writing.<sup>62</sup> Hirsch writes that 'postmemory characterises the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated

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<sup>61</sup>Kapralski, p. 217.

<sup>62</sup>Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narratives and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard UP 2002). See pp. 23-24 for Hirsch's definition of the term post-memory.

by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated'.<sup>63</sup> Rosenberg's text does give the impression that she is 'dominated' by these narratives that took place before she was born and the presence of her father's memories throughout the text, but particularly in the beginning of the narrative, suggests that the presence of these (unspoken) narratives in her life has a strong influence. McGlothlin remarks of second generation writers that they 'not only investigate the reference point of their invisible inscriptions but they in turn actively inscribe as well, marking the ways in which the Holocaust has impacted them'.<sup>64</sup> Rosenberg identifies the reference point of her 'invisible inscriptions' and uses *Kokolores* to investigate this reference point by focusing on the ways in which the Holocaust has impacted her own life and her family's life.

It is important first to identify the nature of the trauma that Marianne Rosenberg is marking within her text; this, I would argue, is the profound loss of a history and the absence of family members who should have been present in Rosenberg's life. She writes of herself as a little girl being drawn to the picture of her grandmother which always hung in the living room wherever they lived

Immer wieder zog es mich zu ihrem Bild. In jeder Wohnung, in der wir wohnten, und wir zogen oft um, hing ihr Bild an der Wand. Darunter waren bronzefarbene Leuchter angebracht. Bei jedem Fest brannten sie. Ich weiß nicht, wie oft ich Nachts aufwachte, um zielstrebig in das Zimmer zu gehen, in dem dieses Bild mich anschaute. Es erschien mir lebendig (*Kokolores*, p. 12).

Marianne Rosenberg's description of this photograph's power over her to lead her into the room where the picture was hanging and to look at her grandmother's image demonstrates her profound connection to the relatives she never knew. While one could argue that Marianne Rosenberg did not know her grandmother personally and so could not feel a sense of personal loss, what is conveyed by her writing is that the loss of this figure results in something missing from Rosenberg's own life.

Sigrid Weigel notes that

'survival' itself circumscribes a clear, unequivocal forming of a position arising from the relation to the camps and the past immediacy and simultaneity to the murdered people who occupy the blind spot of origin within the genealogy of the survivors: the nameless and often unburied dead mark a gap, and, at the same time, the beginning of mourning and trauma that extend generations.<sup>65</sup>

As discussed in the previous section, Otto Rosenberg's principal experience of trauma was the loss of his family in the concentration camps; this was communicated in his text through his constant questioning of why he should have been the one to survive. In Marianne Rosenberg's text, the reader is presented with images of her father coping with his loss and the memories of

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>64</sup>McGlothlin, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup>Weigel, p. 271.

his family and her confrontation with the gap that has been left in her family as she writes with empathy of her father's experiences.

In *Kokolores*, she devotes the first two chapters to her father, his experiences and his influence on her life. The sense of loss that Otto Rosenberg felt is treated sensitively in her narrative as she evokes the loss that he experienced and its impact on her. She remembers

manchmal hörte ich meinen Vater nachts laut weinen. Er rief immer wieder ihre Namen und fragte sich, wieso ausgerechnet er überlebt hatte. Ein tiefer, klagender Laut brach aus ihm und ging den Namen, die er rief, voraus. Ein Laut aus einer Welt, die ich nur aus Erzählungen kenne, etwas, das sich nie mehr abstreifen lässt (*Kokolores*, p. 11).

Marianne Rosenberg makes clear her father's sense of loss and its effect in making the absence of these family members present throughout her life. His loss makes their absence more keenly felt. She writes of the way her father's loss influenced her own future in remembering that

jeder Feiertag, ob Weihnachten oder Geburtstage, war eine Belastung für ihn, er zog sich zurück, sehnte sich nach seinen Menschen, nach den gemeinsamen Festen, bei denen seine Mutter immer sang. Er lehrte mich ihre Lieder und ich sang sie dann für ihn. Das waren die einzigen Momente, in denen ich während des Gesangs ebenfalls berührt war (*Kokolores*, p. 12).

The absence of these family members contributes to a loss of history, one that would most likely have been told through the songs and stories according to the oral tradition, and which Marianne Rosenberg makes a point to learn.

Her writing can then be interpreted as a commemoration of her father's memory and memories and conveys empathy rather than an over-identification with the victim or an attempt to reconstruct and to imagine his experiences in the text. Her book was published in 2006, a year after he died and it is not stated if he had known she was writing it. The empathy she feels towards him and what he went through is evident throughout the text. She recalls in her chapter 'Trauriger Stolz', sitting with her dying father and how he would wake up and speak of the many people who were in the train screaming, hoping it was just a film. She writes of that moment: 'Es gibt Dinge, die sind schlimmer als der Tod selbst, er muss noch einmal durch die Hölle, sein Leben spult sich vor seinem inneren Auge noch einmal ab. Wenn er auftaucht, weiß ich fast immer, in welchem Zeitabschnitt er gerade ist' (*Kokolores*, pp. 242-3). Rather than trying to reconstruct his experience, it is something that she has always lived with and which made him, in a sense, immortal to her:

Als mein Vater starb, trat ein Gefühl der Vereinsamung und Entfremdung ein. Bis dahin war ich Kind gewesen. Irgendwo in meinem Kopf oder vielleicht auch in meinem Herzen hatte sich die Vorstellung breitgemacht, er könne ewig leben. Oft war er dem Tod von der Schippe gesprungen, so oft, dass es für mich nicht mehr vorstellbar war, ihn eines Tages zu verlieren (*Kokolores*, p. 242).



For Marianne Rosenberg, loss seems to become real in the aftermath of her father's death, herself seeing him as the hero of his own story and perhaps in control of his own story with no need for her to imagine and to reconstruct or make sense of what happened. McGlothlin writes that 'rather than concerning itself primarily with certainty and historical truth, postmemorial writing employs narrative to acknowledge the impossibility of fully grasping what happened, even as it ventures to construct a story of the Holocaust.'<sup>66</sup> I would agree that Rosenberg's work does acknowledge the impossibility of fully grasping what happened to her father, the loss of his family members and the horrendous crimes he witnessed and experienced, but she does not try to construct a story of her father's experience of the Holocaust in order to work through this process; rather, she engages on her own journey and search for a space of identity which has been difficult for her to find given the absence of the family members she should have known and the silence surrounding her family's past.

Marianne Hirsch comments that this 'condition of exile from the space of identity, this diasporic experience, is a characteristic aspect of postmemory' and writes of 'the photograph's capacity to signal absence and loss and, at the same time, to make present, rebuild, reconnect, bring back to life'.<sup>67</sup> Rosenberg grapples with this space of identity in her text, sensing the absence of family members and the roles that this family would have played in her own life, and continually returns to the images of the family that her father hangs up in every home they move to in order to counteract the absence that he feels. Her preoccupation with these photographs and her relationship with them constitute the most vivid aspect of marking in *Kokolores*. She writes of being compelled to look at the photograph and the feeling that it awakens in her, which is one that she cannot find any definition or description for:

Oft kroch ich nachts aus meinem Etagenbett, ging ins Wohnzimmer und stellte mich vor das Bild, das meinen Vater mit seiner Mutter und seinen Geschwistern zeigte. Ein Bild, das mich nie losließ. Es geschah immer das Gleiche: Ich starrte auf das Bild und dann setzte etwas ein, ähnlich einem Summen oder Rauschen, das immer lauter wurde. Ich hielt mir die Ohren zu, doch das nützte nichts und mein Körper fühlte sich an, als sei alles aus Draht, Metallen. Wenn es zu schlimm wurde, weckte ich leise meine Mutter. Sie brachte mich zurück ins Bett und ich versuchte ihr mit meinen Händen, die ich merkwürdig verbog, das Gefühl zu zeigen, das ich empfand. Manchmal weinte ich auch, weil ich nicht in der Lage war, es zu erklären (*Kokolores*, p. 72).

The difficulty Rosenberg describes in this passage in trying to express her feelings to her mother by twisting her hands makes clear to the reader the difficulty she has in expressing her sense of loss. Her desperate attempt to show in some physical way the feeling she has when she looks at the picture of her lost relatives, reveals the difficulty of voicing the trauma that has been passed on to her. Her description of being pursued by a loud humming and buzzing and

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<sup>66</sup>McGlothlin, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup>Hirsch, p. 243.

her body made of metal highlights the incapacity she feels in dealing with the absence of those missing family members. She describes how this photograph never let go of her and perhaps provided the only opportunity for her to connect herself with her father's family members and with what he experienced.

#### 5.4.2 Writing Identity

Marianne Rosenberg's autobiography is shaped as a journey from childhood to adulthood, framed by the presence of her father; his death marks the moment when she feels she has finally left her childhood behind. The title of her book, *Kokolores*, is clarified in a chapter near the end of her narrative also titled 'Kokolores' where she explains her musical search for identity in an environment where she was expected to stay the young girl who sang the beloved *Schlager* hits of a time gone by (*Kokolores*, pp. 222-228). In German, 'Kokolores' is a word used to describe something silly or foolish, an act of nonsense. Rosenberg says that for her it means an 'Ablenkung vom Eigentlichen. Etwas Überflüssiges. Nichts kann der Mensch herstellen, was diesen [Natur-] Wundern gleichkommt. Er sucht nach Sinn, nach Bedeutung, sucht sein Ich, will Anerkennung' (*Kokolores*, p. 220). The front and back covers of the book further highlight this search for identity, with the older Marianne Rosenberg on the front cover and on the back, the little girl with the caption 'Geschichten aus meinem Leben, oder, Wie ich lernte Marianne Rosenberg zu sein'. The second part of this title is a direct reference to the search for identity present in Marianne Rosenberg's book. Her narrative follows a linear flow beginning with her childhood, the opening scene introducing her father as she describes being woken in the middle of the night, bundled into the car along with her brother and taken to a bar where her father is waiting for Marianne to sing and her brother to play the guitar. This first image of him is not altogether favorable as she writes

mein Vater umarmt mich, küsst mich, 'Mein Mädel', sagt er zärtlich, und obwohl ich seine Liebe spüre, muss ich zu Boden schauen, weil die Starre seiner Augen mich traurig macht. Könnte ich ihm nur sagen, dass es nichts nützt und wie es ist, wenn er sich verwandelt, dass alles nur noch schlimmer wird. Aber das geht nicht [...] Er macht die Gesetze und ein Gesetz lautet, dem Vater nicht zu widersprechen oder ihm Ratschläge zu erteilen (*Kokolores*, p. 8).

Her musical talent becomes linked with her father's experience in this opening chapter and her talent becomes subject to his patriarchal authority. The sadness with which she writes about the 'Starre seiner Augen' underlines the helplessness of her position as his child in her inability to reach back to those memories and know the experiences that have affected her father.

She writes about her father's involvement in her musical career and his particular fondness for the way she sings 'Jiddische Mamme'. She remembers once singing it at a cafe and describes how everyone around her was quiet and listening with tears running down their cheeks: 'Ich kann es nicht verstehen, warum sie weinen. Es muss mit ihrem Leben zu tun haben. Sie

weinen über sich und ihr Schicksal... während ich ungerührt weitersinge und sie beobachte' (*Kokolores*, p. 9). Again, the context of this song is one that she finds difficult to understand; she has trouble imagining the experiences the audience members associate with it. From the beginning of *Kokolores*, Rosenberg's text concerns itself with her struggle to reconcile her musical and personal identity through the years with her father's history, her family's history and her own musical ideas. In the text this quest ends with her returning to the music that her father would have liked. This is represented in the text in one of her last chapters entitled 'Trauriger Stolz' which is also the name of a song that she wrote after finding a *Hakenkreuz* scratched on the door of her parents house. She writes 'es schmerzte mich, dass er recht behalten hatte, es war nicht tot, schlief nur' (*Kokolores*, p. 241). This realisation would not let go until she wrote it down in the form of a song. In this chapter, she also writes of her father's death. The search for her musical identity and mourning the loss of family members go hand in hand.

For Rosenberg, it is difficult to understand why her father wants her to deny her Romani heritage. As previously mentioned, Marianne had been told by her father not to make her family background known to anyone else. She highlights the conflicting elements of German Romani identity in her text through her illustration of herself being bullied at school for being a 'Zigeuner', her knowledge that her father wailing in the night was not the experience of the other children, and her own relationship with the photographs in the living room. She remembers her teacher calling her a 'dreckige Zigeuner' and wonders how people can tell her background when she has not told them about it: 'Sie merken es also doch, mein Vater hat recht. Aber woran erkennen sie es? Ich sehe aus wie jedes andere Mädchen. Außer meinen dunkelen Haaren kein Hinweis. Es muss sich um eine Art geschulten Blick handeln' (*Kokolores*, p. 51). The reader understands through Rosenberg's selection of memories that living with the silence surrounding those memories and with the knowledge that there was a threat involved in acknowledging her father's ancestry and her own roots was a difficult experience for her. Importantly, as she points out 'Wir waren anders. Als Kind will man nicht anders sein' (*Kokolores*, p. 51). She highlights the difficulty not only of coping with her father's memories of persecution and his continuing traumatised throughout her childhood, but also of her working out her own identity as a German and as a Romani. She, in the same way as he does, establishes herself as a German Romani and a *Berlinerin*. Throughout her text, her writing is sprinkled with bits of Berlin dialect. For example, when she ponders her musical career and her own identity, she writes 'Wat hat'n dit mit Marianne Rosenberg zu tun'? She reminds the reader here of her strong regional identification with Berlin, echoing her father's similar identification of himself as a 'Berliner Sinto'. Her musical talent, which made her an icon for Germany, and the strong presence of her father's past and traumatic memories of the Romani Holocaust represent the duality of her identity she reveals to the reader in *Kokolores*.

Given that this text does center itself very much on Marianne Rosenberg's struggle to establish her own musical identity, separate from the influence of her father, and to establish the place and relevance of her father's past in her own life, it is necessary to ask whether or not the presence of her father in her text must be examined beyond its function of commemorating his life. The insecurity in writing identified in the work of other Romani writers in identifying connections with German and Austrian *Gadje* in light of the fear of Auschwitz happening again raises the question to what extent Marianne Rosenberg would be able to reveal more about her father's life and to attempt to reconstruct a story of what her father went through in the way that McGlothlin and Hirsch suggest that some Jewish second-generation writers have done. As previously discussed, Rosenberg emphasises throughout the text that she was not able to contradict her father; when she does decide to perform the kind of music she wants to perform, she remembers her father's disappointment in it (*Kokolores*, p. 234). The memories contained in her autobiography, particularly in reference to her father, seem carefully selected with intention and purpose. She continues some of his own political work in that she also raises the issue of 'Entschädigung', echoing her father's political intentions in the writing of his book.

*Kokolores* was published after her father's death and her text also serves as a way of drawing attention to the Romani Holocaust. She outlines her father's experiences in the camps in the beginning of the book, also bringing up the difficulties Sinti and Roma faced in receiving compensation they were entitled to. 'Auf die ihm zustehende Entschädigung verzichtete er. Seine Mutter hätte zum Beweis dafür exhumiert werden müssen', she writes (*Kokolores*, p. 29). The idea of having to exhume his mother's body in order to be compensated for his imprisonment in the camps highlights the difficulties Romanies faced in receiving compensation. In addition, like many other Romani writers, Marianne Rosenberg suggests that the fear that Auschwitz could happen again in Germany is always present. She writes of her father's warning 'dass man nie so genau wisse, ob es nicht doch wieder so kommen könne, dass sie uns einsperrten, in Viehwagen, und uns fortbrächten. Wir sollten vorsichtig sein, nichts erzählen von zu Hause' (*Kokolores*, p. 52). I would argue that this caution, although perhaps not quite as apparent as in other texts, is still present in Marianne Rosenberg's. It could be argued that this is also a commemoration, empathy and tribute to her father and his wishes, that Rosenberg herself would not have been so forgiving. Her language can be quite direct and unforgiving 'Wer sagt, dass Zeit alles heilen kann, irrt. Ein Menschenleben hat nicht gereicht' (*Kokolores*, p. 15).

Rosenberg does not try to imagine her father's experiences or to re-create them in her text. However, there is a distinct awareness in *Kokolores* that Rosenberg is establishing herself as being connected to her father's experiences and having come after them. The sense of this exploration of coming after the event that shapes all to come is potent in Marianne Rosenberg's writing. In her description of her parents' marriage, the reader gains an impression of this feeling of coming 'after'. Rosenberg explains that

mit der Heirat meiner Eltern begann eine lange Reise, eine Familiengeschichte, in der die Morde und ihre Folgen uns nie verlassen haben. Ich wuchs in Frieden auf. Ein Frieden, unter dessen Oberfläche es immer noch brodelte. Mit dieser Vergangenheit ließ sich nur schwerlich Frieden schließen. Sie war unabänderlich, wie es Vergangenheiten nun einmal an sich haben (*Kokolores*, p. 27).

In this passage, Rosenberg makes the reader aware of the constant conflict with the past that has been part of her life. Her description of a new family history which carries with it the murders and the consequences of these murders also brings to light the feeling that all of the other family members came 'after' this traumatic event.

She emphasises that this feeling of a break with the past, the continuation of the presence of these memories, and the absence of relatives was furthered by the fact that her mother was not Romani. Indeed, her father's choice to marry a non-Romani woman resulted in the alienation of his only living distant relatives who shunned him for marrying a German woman. She describes his choice in marrying her mother as being the choice for the 'leidvollen Weg':

Wenn es auch nicht viele Verwandte waren, einige lebten noch, dazu gehörten Onkel, die eine rechtsprechende Funktion in der Gemeinschaft der Sinti hatten und von denen er aus der Gemeinschaft ausgeschlossen wurde. Was bedeutet das schon, wird manch einer denken, es bedeutet viel angesichts der Vergangenheit, die stärker war als jede Zeit. Auschwitz, das lag gerade einmal sieben Jahre zurück. Wie es vergessen, wie die Toten vergessen, wie den Deutschen jemals wieder vertrauen oder ihnen vergeben? Es war undenkbar, auch für ihn. Und doch tat er es, er heiratete sie (*Kokolores*, p. 27).

Here Marianne Rosenberg echoes her father's questioning of why he survived with more questions of how to move past resentment and traumatic memories of the dead. She highlights the difficulty in forgiving the Germans and trusting them; again, the fear of Auschwitz happening again is a presence in her work. Rosenberg describes her mother's role in her father's life by noting, 'seine Wunden heilen konnte sie nicht, aber sie war Anteilnahme, war Trost' (*Kokolores*, p. 27). The helplessness Marianne Rosenberg feels when confronted with the presence of her father's 'narratives of the past' and the pain of his memories clearly marks Marianne Rosenberg's text in her descriptions of wanting to be able to comfort him and being speechless in his unanswerable anguish.

## 5.5 Communicating Memory

As stated before, Marianne Rosenberg does not seem to reconstruct and to imagine her father's experiences or those of her dead family members. However, she does seek to represent those experiences and their effect on the second generation. Hirsch writes of postmemory that it is 'a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection and creation – often based on

silence rather than speech, on the invisible rather than the visible'.<sup>68</sup> This statement is interesting to consider in terms of the texts discussed in this chapter and perhaps more broadly of Romani writing in Germany and Austria. Marianne Rosenberg's book very much brings her father's experiences to light through projection based partly on the silence she was expected to maintain. She says in *Kokolores* that her father's experiences in the Holocaust were something that she and her family found out over the years; her father was not able to tell these memories to his family in the way he was later able to narrate them in *Das Brennglas*. 'Fragen wollte ihn niemand von uns. Wie soll man etwas erzählen, das man nicht erzählen kann, weil es jede nur denkbare Vorstellung übertrifft'? (*Kokolores*, p. 12). However, Hirsch's comment that post-memory is connected more directly or 'chronologically' with the past is problematic in the Holocaust narratives of the Sinti and Roma because articulation of the trauma happened so long after the Holocaust. In the case of Marianne Rosenberg, her father wrote his book only a few years before she wrote her own. The second generation is coming to terms with the silence of their parents, but the atmosphere is now one where victims are encouraged to tell their stories. The act of imagining for the second generation may be still to come.

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<sup>68</sup>Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14 1 (2001), 5-37. Here, p. 9.

## Chapter 6

# Threatening Landscapes: Stefan Horvath's *Katzenstreu*

In this chapter I will discuss Horvath's *Katzenstreu*,<sup>1</sup> in terms of the analysis used in the previous chapters. Horvath's work is an example of second generation writing which tries to imagine the experiences of his parents and other family members in the Holocaust and also offers a contemporary view of Austrian Romani society from within the Romani settlement in Oberwart; the strong presence of Auschwitz in both of Horvath's narratives offers a particular connection with the other narratives discussed thus far. I will discuss *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*<sup>2</sup> as a narrative where Horvath attempts to work through the traumatic experiences of his parents' generation by imagining and reconstructing the concentration camps. My primary focus, however, will be on *Katzenstreu*, which tries to understand the 1995 attack on the Romani settlement in Oberwart, Austria. This work also takes a significant step away from the Holocaust memoirs which make up the majority of German and Austrian Romani writing and makes room for the possibility of Austrian Romani writing as a way of illustrating the contemporary lives of Romanies in Austria. I will analyse Horvath's *Katzenstreu* as a way of working through trauma, an assertion of individual and collective Romani identity, its grappling with the spaces occupied by the need for belonging and Heimat as well as its literary qualities as a more complex narrative dealing with trauma and the generational transference of memory.

### 6.1 *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz and Katzenstreu*

In the early hours of February 5, 1995, four Romanies were killed by a bomb that exploded when they tried to remove a sign that read 'Roma zurück nach Indien' that had been placed on

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<sup>1</sup>Stefan Horvath, *Katzenstreu* (Oberwart: lex liszt, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>Stefan Horvath, *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* (Oberwart: lex liszt, 2003).

the edge of the Romani settlement in Oberwart, Austria.<sup>3</sup> It was this tragedy, which killed one of Stefan Horvath's sons, that prompted Horvath to begin writing; in 2003, he published his first narrative titled *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, a book of stories which attempted to imagine the experiences of his parents and relatives from Oberwart in the concentration camps of the Third Reich; these stories are accompanied by illustrations drawn by local primary school pupils. In February, 2007, he published *Katzenstreu*, a narrative which deals directly with the tragedy of 1995. Although Stefan Horvath was born after the end of World War II, Auschwitz is a central theme in both of his books. It is interesting to note that, unlike many other second generation writers, Horvath was spurred to write because of being directly affected by another individual tragedy which forced him to confront his people's collective past.

Kushner has noted the importance of Holocaust testimony that reflects the inherent individuality of experience.<sup>4</sup> This individuality is evident in the Romani Holocaust experience Horvath explores in his first book and in his portrayal of the contemporary situation for Romanies in Austria in *Katzenstreu*. Horvath publicises the contemporary threats Romanies continue to face in Austria today, while at the same time making the connection to their persecution in the Holocaust. Horvath's life until the point that his son was murdered had transpired without his engagement with the events of his people's past. He had separated himself from the settlement in Oberwart by moving to Vienna, and lived life day to day without questioning the role of the Romanies in contemporary Austria or in the history of Austria. This avoidance can be seen as a symptom of traumas which he has repressed; I would argue therefore, that Horvath's *Katzenstreu* becomes a document of the working through of trauma, drawing on cultural memory as a vital resource in rebuilding identity.

Elfriede Jelinek, in reference to her play *Stecken, Stab und Stangl* which deals with the 1995 tragedy,<sup>5</sup> emphasised the connection between Auschwitz and the prejudices in Austria today, pointing out that 'Auschwitz is a kind of empty space that is filled with pathos and many false notes, even kitsch. One can, however, write texts [...] in which Auschwitz or the German concentration camp hangs over everything like a threat, because of the continuity of history, that is, its tendency to repeat itself'.<sup>6</sup> Horvath has done just this in *Katzenstreu*, as the presence of Auschwitz is felt throughout his writing, not only in the attack that he describes, but in the

<sup>3</sup>The four men killed in the attack, Karl Horvath, 22, Erwin Horvath, 18, Peter Sarközi, 27, and Josef Simon, 40, were from the nearby Roma settlement. At the time, even though nobody officially claimed responsibility, the *Bajuwarische Freiheitsarmee* was found to be responsible for the attack. It later turned out that this group was indeed one man, Franz Fuchs. See Ulrich Glauber, 'Si po drom chasarimasko. "Auf dem Weg sich zu verlieren": Roma Kultur', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 28 January 2004. See also Clemens Berger, 'Being Franz F.', *Datum — Seiten der Zeit*, No. 2, February 2007, pp. 4, 28-33, for an interview with Stefan Horvath and more information on the attack perpetrated by Fuchs. See *Katzenstreu* (p. 99), for a timeline of the events connected with this attack.

<sup>4</sup>Kushner, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>See Elfriede Jelinek, *Stecken, Stab und Stangl — Raststätte — Wolken. Heim. Neue Theaterstücke* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997) and an interesting analysis of this work by Britta Kallin, 'The Representation of Roma in Elfriede Jelinek's *Stecken, Stab und Stangl*', which addresses the question of how Jelinek represents Romanies as silent victims in the play.

<sup>6</sup>Bethman, p. 63.



feelings and attitudes of the people he chooses to try to understand and in his own memory and perceptions of Romanies in Oberwart.

## 6.2 Stefan Horvath

Stefan Horvath was born on November 12, 1949 in the newly rebuilt Romani settlement in Oberwart, Austria. The original settlement had been destroyed after its 360 residents were deported to the concentration camps of the Third Reich; the wood from their houses was distributed among the residents of the town.<sup>7</sup> Gerhard Baumgartner estimates that of the 7000 Romanies who lived in Burgenland, only 600 to 700 of them survived the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> Horvath writes that only 19 of the Oberwart settlement's former residents returned after the war; among these few were his own parents. Horvath emphasises his accomplishment of being able to attend school and learn how to write. With the aid of a teacher who recognised Horvath's aptitude for learning, Horvath was the first Romani to be allowed to attend the Hauptschule in Oberwart. In *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, Horvath introduces his book by remembering the special attention of one teacher:

Als ich mich auf Drängen meines Lehrers für die Hauptschule anmeldete, hieß es plötzlich, dass bei mir unbedingt eine Aufnahmeprüfung erforderlich wäre. Ich habe nicht verstanden, warum gerade bei mir so etwas notwendig war und wollte daher weiterhin die Volksschule besuchen. Doch zu meiner Überraschung akzeptierte das mein Lehrer nicht und ging mit mir zur Prüfung, die ich mit Erfolg bestand (*Auschwitz*, p. 7).

After he finished school, he worked for various building companies in Vienna.

The tragic loss of his son caused a sense of rupture in Horvath's life as he quit his job in Vienna and accepted a position as a cleaner in the hospital which had been built on the location of the settlement where he was born. The interruption to his normal daily life and the necessary confrontation with the prejudice that had made itself so present in his life through the attack on his son, spurred Horvath to create a new beginning, question his identity, return to the schooling of his youth, and to write down what happened.

## 6.3 Trauma and Identity

### 6.3.1 Imagining Auschwitz

In *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, Horvath struggles to understand what his parents and relatives went through in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. Both of his parents survived

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<sup>7</sup>Clemens Berger, 'Brief an einen Mörder', *Die Presse*, 3 February 2007, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Baumgartner, p. 44.

the camps, but there is little indication in Horvath's text of how much they actually communicated of their memories and experiences. He presents 'Erzählungen', which imagine their experiences and the experiences of other victims; he attempts to reconstruct what their lives and deaths were like in the camps. In this way, Horvath's text differs as a second generation Holocaust text from Marianne Rosenberg's autobiography, *Kokolores*, in which the author does not imagine or reconstruct her father's past. Horvath's attempt to imagine and to reconstruct the memories of the people who were lost in the concentration camps suggests that, in working through the traumatic experience of losing his son to a racist attack, he is forced to work through the trauma associated with the collective identity of Romanies in Austria. This is reminiscent of Lessing's account of his father's murder in *Mein Leben im Versteck* which functions as an individual way of nearing the collective experience of the Romanies in the Holocaust. In *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* Horvath imagines his parents' experiences of the Holocaust through poetry and *Erzählungen* that attempt to describe the horrors and tragedies of the concentration camps; his reconstruction of Auschwitz allows him to supply evidence of the silence and the absence that was the consequence of the extermination of so many Romani lives in the camps. He consciously gives voices to those who never came back, and it is the forgotten history of the Romanies in the concentration camps to which he wants to draw attention. Although Horvath himself cannot write a first-hand account of victimisation in the Third Reich, his first book addresses the Romani Holocaust. Hirsch's term 'post-memory' can be applied to Horvath's work in that he, through the more recent tragedy of 1995, is able to connect through 'imaginative investment and creation' to his parents' memories of the concentration camps and the experiences of those who never came back from the camps.<sup>9</sup>

Assembled as a collection of his poems and stories, and accompanied by drawings from local schoolchildren, *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* has a didactic quality; its format as an oversized book with a larger font size adds to this impression. The book is accompanied by a CD containing recorded readings of some of the poems and stories, creating a remarkable mix of the Romani oral tradition with the new writing tradition. It is interesting to note that although some of the poems are translated into Romani, the translator is not Stefan Horvath but Emmerich Gärtner Horvath, which suggests that Stefan Horvath does not feel confident enough with the language to translate them himself. Baumgartner has pointed out that 'wie alle Sprachminderheiten Österreichs unterlagen auch die Roma und Sinti ab den frühen sechziger Jahren einer galoppierenden sprachlichen Assimilation'.<sup>10</sup> Karl Stojka's concern that the language of the Romanies was dying out seems to manifest itself then in this second generation text which is written in German, a language Horvath expresses pride in having learned and mastered in school.<sup>11</sup> Horvath's pride in his command of the German language and his use of it in his

<sup>9</sup>See Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 22 on 'post-memory'.

<sup>10</sup>Baumgartner, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup>See Baumgartner, p. 42-43. Baumgartner notes a revival of and urgency to the learning and preservation of

writing also suggests that he wants to assert a certain level of belonging in Austria. Améry has commented on the relationship between language and a sense of belonging, writing: 'Jede Sprache ist Teil einer Gesamt-wirklichkeit, auf die man wohlbegründetes Besitzrecht haben muß, wenn man guten Gewissens und sicheren Schrittes in den Sprachraum eintreten soll'.<sup>12</sup> Horvath's text is written in German and he therefore expresses a sense of comfort and confidence in using this language.

Though Horvath does not go into the detail of the memories that his parents actually told him, it is possible to conjecture that his parents also were confronted with the question of why they were some of the few to survive and return to Burgenland when so many others were killed. Marianne Rosenberg deals with her father's constant posing of the same question to himself by highlighting the few memories that he told her about and emphasising the impact that his silence had on her. In contrast, Horvath imagines and attempts to recreate his parents' experiences. He expresses the same longing to know his lost relatives that Marianne Rosenberg does in *Kokolores*, but he does it through putting himself into the camps and imagining the different situations prisoners faced. For example, in 'Der Vergessene', he writes of the absence of the Romanies who used to live in Oberwart:

Ich habe Sehnsucht nach ihnen. Dreihundertsechzig sind deportiert worden. Erschlagen wie räudige Hunde, vergast und verbrannt wie der Abfall in einer Sondermüllverbrennungsanlage. Neunzehn haben dieses Grauen überlebt. Viel zu wenig für mich, um mich darüber freuen zu können. Ich vermisse dreihundertvierzig Zigeuner. [...] Die Rückkehr von neunzehn Zigeunern haben die meisten der Bevölkerung sechs Jahre später teilnahmslos registriert. Es gab keine Heil Hitler Rufe mehr und niemand hat für die neunzehn applaudiert. Plötzlich waren Erinnerungslücken da und keiner konnte sich erinnern, je der braunen Horde angehört zu haben. [...] Jetzt, wo ich diese Zeilen schreibe, ist mir schwer ums Herz. Ich vermisse meine Großeltern, Onkeln, Tanten, Nichten und Neffen. Kurzum alle, die ich nicht kennen lernen durfte, weil sich Adolf zum Gott ausrufen ließ, zum Herrscher über Leben und Tod (*Auschwitz*, p. 33).

In this passage, Horvath highlights the experiences of the relatives that he never knew; he describes how he 'misses them' and can feel their absence in his life and the effect of their absence on the Romani settlement in Oberwart. Further, the immediacy of his description of their deaths ('erschlagen wie räudige Hunde') is symptomatic of a trauma / sense of horror that is difficult to let go. Horvath indicates the continuing sense of loss and the marking of the traumatic experiences of his relatives through the 'genealogically self-perpetuating manifestation of symptoms' which Weigel has identified to be characteristic of the generational transference

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Romani in Austria, highlighting the work of Dieter Halwachs in a research project on Austrian varieties of Romani and the work of Mozes Heinschink, who for decades has recorded oral narratives, songs of Austrian and eastern European Romanies. See also Mozes F. Heinschink, 'E Romani Chib - Die Sprache der Roma', in *Roma, das unbekannte Volk. Schicksal und Kultur*, ed. by Mozes F. Heinschink and Ursula Hemetek (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: 1994), pp. 110-128.

<sup>12</sup>Améry, pp. 91-92.

of Holocaust memory to the second generation.<sup>13</sup> In fact, this marking of trauma continues to be evident in *Katzenstreu*, where Horvath expresses his connection with the location of the old settlement in Oberwart by getting a job as a caretaker at the hospital that was built over it.

In other *Erzählungen* included in this book, he identifies with Romani victims of the concentration camps, not necessarily family members, trying to imagine and to re-create their experiences through his short stories and poems. He writes in 'Gedanken eines Sterbenden':

Ich höre nicht mehr das Stöhnen der Sterbenden um mich und sehe auch die ausgemergelten Zigeuner nicht, die mit mir in der Baracke im Konzentrationslager sind. Wahrscheinlich liegen die meisten im Sterben, so wie ich auf einer Holzpritsche. Ich rieche auch den Schweiß und Gestank meiner Mithäftlinge nicht, denn mir bleibt nur eine ganz kurze Zeit, um Abschied von dieser irdischen Welt zu nehmen (*Auschwitz*, p. 34).

The 'manifestation of symptoms'<sup>14</sup> is further evident in this passage through the immediacy of Horvath's representation of this dying prisoner. Here, Horvath places himself in the position of a prisoner who is dying and imagines the smells and the sounds of the camp; he goes on to explore the dying thoughts of this prisoner, imagining his thoughts about his home and his parents 'in einem kleinen Burgenländischen Dorf' where his father is playing the violin and the sky is full of stars. The prisoner also wishes to lie in a meadow, drinking in the smell of flowers and fresh hay and imagines the feel of the cold water of a brook and the bees humming through the flowers (*Auschwitz*, p. 34). In other *Erzählungen*, Horvath imagines the desperation prisoners would feel while trapped in their prisons with the threat of violence and hunger: 'Seit ich hier bin, besteht mein Tag nur im Kampf gegen Hunger und Durst, gegen die Schläge der Aufseher und im Abbau dieser Felsenwand' (*Auschwitz*, p. 38).

In *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, Horvath expresses anger and resentment at the long silence surrounding the victimisation of the Romanies in the Holocaust and the delay in the official recognition of this suffering. In 'Der Vergessene', he points out the 'Erinnerungslücken' and the people who failed to act when 360 Romanies were deported and decries the indifference of these people towards those Romanies who survived and returned (*Auschwitz*, p. 33). Horvath also makes repeated references to Adolf Hitler throughout the poems and stories included in this book. For example, in 'Ein Brief aus Auschwitz', Horvath explores the resentment of a prisoner in Auschwitz who writes an imaginary letter to Hitler, ending it with the following postscript:

Natürlich habe ich dir vergessen zu sagen, dass ich nicht lesen und schreiben kann. Du selbst hast es mir doch damals in meiner Heimatgemeinde im Burgenland ausdrücklich verboten. Du hast mir einen Schulbesuch nicht erlaubt.

Wie du jetzt den Brief bekommen wirst? Natürlich ganz einfach. Ich werde spätestens morgen tot sein und verbrannt werden, ich werde als Asche in alle

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<sup>13</sup>Weigel, p. 271.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

Winde verstreut werden, und dann hoffe ich, dass ich bei günstigem Wind durch dein geöffnetes Fenster in deine Kanzlei getrieben werde und du dann durch meine Asche von meinem Schicksal erfährst.

Mit deutschem Gruß, dein Z6093 (*Auschwitz*, p. 44).

The naming and targeting specifically of Hitler in his *Erzählungen* echoes what Clemens Berger later, in reference to Horvath's *Katzenstreu*, calls 'ein Brief an einen Mörder', and Horvath's direct confrontation with the perpetrator in that text. This passage clearly demonstrates Horvath's resentment at the loss of his ancestors and the treatment they received in the Third Reich. The specific naming of Hitler and the signing of the letter 'mit deutschem Gruss' could be seen to absolve the Austrian public of Horvath's resentment and to indicate the caution and insecurity previously referred to in reference to other Romani writers. However, this forgetting of what had happened to Romanies in Austria in the Third Reich, and, for Horvath, particularly in Burgenland and the Romani settlement in Oberwart where so few returned, takes on new resonance for him in 1995 when he realises that this place is still unsafe and threatening for Romanies. Améry argued that to stay silent without goading the perpetrator into remembering and taking responsibility for the past was, in effect, to forgive.<sup>15</sup> Horvath had let the experiences of his parents and the relatives who never came back remain in the past. *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* gives the impression that Horvath was shaken into a realisation of the vulnerable position Romanies still occupy in Austria; it is the attack on the Romani settlement at Oberwart nearly fifty years after the end of the war that moves him into a sort of 'mode of resentment' to break his silence about the Holocaust.<sup>16</sup>

### 6.3.2 Addressing the 'Threat of Auschwitz'

Horvath's interaction with the experiences of the concentration camp victims carries over into his second book, *Katzenstreu*, where he struggles to gain an understanding of the motivations behind the racist attack in Oberwart in 1995 by trying to enter the mind of his son's murderer. Horvath also addresses the reactions of the Austrian public, creating a forum for the various responses that were commonly heard after the attack in his description of a *Stammtisch* at a local *Wirtshaus*. The only victims who are given a voice in *Katzenstreu* are the Romani victims of the Holocaust who speak to Horvath in a vision and encourage him to speak out about what happened. Horvath describes the traumatic event of losing his son to Franz Fuchs's bomb attack as the moment when he was forced to face the traumatic events of the Romani past in Austria and emphasises that it marks a point of interruption in his life. Perhaps at this point in time the inherited sense of trauma became a reality he experienced first-hand as he was forced to see the consequences of the prejudice to which he had become accustomed. He writes of his feelings

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<sup>15</sup> Améry, p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

after visiting the crime scene: 'In diesem Augenblick war mir klar, dass mein bisheriges Leben nicht mehr aufrecht zu erhalten war, und sich mir eine völlig neue Dimension aufgetan hatte' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 7). The long silence surrounding the recognition of the Romani Holocaust comes across strongly through Stefan Horvath's writing and further emphasises Assmann's assertion that cultural memory comprises a key element in rebuilding shattered identity.<sup>17</sup> This cultural memory, which has been transmitted to Horvath as a second generation Romani who knows about the Holocaust, helps him to articulate his own individual identity as a father and as a member of the Romani community who must come to terms with the tragic death of his son and the attack on the settlement in Oberwart. Through his strong empathy for the Romani victims of the Holocaust, these two traumas seem to merge at a personal level.

In *Katzenstreu*, Horvath grapples with the question that is inevitably part of any traumatic experience — the question of *why*. *Katzenstreu* struggles to gain some sort of understanding of how someone could want to carry out such an attack. Horvath's son was killed in an attack launched by Franz Fuchs who carried out a series of letter bombs in the years from 1993-1996. His targets were all people in Austria who worked towards integration and people of darker skin who were considered Austrian.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, in his choice of victims, he selected those who helped people he would describe as 'other' to be seen as Austrian or to assimilate themselves in Austrian society. Berger writes, 'In Franz Fuchs kulminieren die reaktionären Affekte der Moderne: Heimat etwa, das ist Blut und Boden, und so kämpft er beinahe ausschließlich gegen österreichische Staatsbürger, die er nicht für Österreicher hält'.<sup>19</sup> The four Romanies from the settlement in Oberwart, however, were the only ones killed in all of the attacks carried out by Fuchs. Public knowledge of the event was widespread, and at first it was widely thought that it had been an act of violence committed by Romanies (*Katzenstreu*, pp. 8-9). The tragedy of the attack was felt across Austria and brought the discrimination against Romanies, very much still present in Austrian society, out in the open.

Horvath tries to get inside the mind of the person who murdered his son and wonders what Fuchs's parents were like; he imagines what the average Austrian, having a drink in the *Wirtshaus* and discussing the attack, had thought about attack when it happened. Through his exploration of these alternate viewpoints, he reveals his own personal struggle in processing what happened. The result is a literary narration of his grief and his struggle to understand the loss he has experienced. Berger characterises Horvath's relationship with the perpetrator by saying: 'Das ist gleichzeitig das zweite Trauma, das den dicken Brief zu schreiben forderte: die Verweigerung jeglicher Auseinandersetzung, Ende und Anfang einer schrecklichen Beziehung, die von einem Wann hergestellt wurde'.<sup>20</sup> Berger refers to Nietzsche's assertion that a book is

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<sup>17</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

<sup>18</sup> *Katzenstreu*, p. 99.

<sup>19</sup> C. Berger, 'Brief an einen Mörder', p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

like 'ein Dicker Brief an Freunden', and puts forwards the idea that Horvath's narrative might be like a letter to an enemy.<sup>21</sup> While Horvath finds fault with Fuchs being characterised as his enemy and remains insistent that he has forgiven Fuchs, the idea of the letter, the act of dialogue and trying to understand does imply a therapeutic aspect to his writing. The struggle to understand the perpetrator's motivation begins a relationship that will not end without the exploration of a possible explanation. *Katzenstreu* helps Horvath supply himself with an ending, a narrative of the situation from its beginning to its end.

Assmann has written of the importance of cultural memory in dealing with trauma, calling it a vital resource: 'Dieses [kulturelle] Gedächtnis wird in der Situation der Desintegration der Person durch das Trauma zur vitalen Ressource. Dieses Gedächtnis zu reaktivieren heißt den Teufelskreis der Zerstörung und Ausbeutung zu verlassen und eine überlegene Sicht zu gewinnen'.<sup>22</sup> Confronting the past and remembering a collective experience of victimhood allows Horvath to work through the traumatic experience of losing his son and to gain an 'überlegene Sicht'. The act of writing for Horvath began as a way of remembering and processing the memories that contributed to his own 'Teufelskreis der Zerstörung' in the form of nightmares and depression. Horvath writes in the concluding pages of his narrative:

Mit meinem ersten Buch *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* habe ich das Leid der Burgenland Roma während des Nationalsozialismus dokumentiert. Aber mit diesem Buch hatte ich mein persönliches Trauma noch nicht abgelegt, und daher war es nahe liegend, mich mit dem Attentat auseinander zu setzen [...]. Dieser Versuch, das Oberwarter Attentat und die Ereignisse davor aus verschiedenen Perspektiven zu betrachten, war wahrscheinlich das Entscheidende für die Genesung meiner Psyche (*Katzenstreu*, p. 97).

Confronting the silence surrounding the deportation of the Burgenland Romanies and the extermination of their lives in the concentration camps was not sufficient for Horvath; he felt compelled to work through the disruption of his sense of security and his personal experience of trauma.<sup>23</sup> He incorporates the Austrian public into his narrative in the form of four men regularly meeting to play cards in a local *Wirtshaus* and discussing current events with the *Wirt* and his wife. Horvath writes, 'Diese Rolle war eigentlich die leichteste, weil in Österreich damals die konträrsten Meinungen über die Roma und das Attentat zu hören waren' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 14). Knowing that the attack was being talked about all around Austria and Horvath's knowledge that he himself was a subject of this discussion most likely became a reason for him to write and to assert his own identity in opposition to the ones being constructed for him. *Katzenstreu* takes on directly the situation of the Roma in Austria in the aftermath of the Third Reich; Horvath addresses the lack of acknowledgement of the persecution of the Romanies and the continued prejudice and dangers they face today.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 294.

<sup>23</sup>On the devastation of the Burgenland Romani community in the Holocaust, see Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, pp. 101-105.

As previously discussed in reference to the other authors discussed in this thesis, LaCapra puts forth the idea of 'working through' trauma associated with experiences of the Holocaust. In Horvath's text, the struggle with the traumatic event of losing his son in a violent manner and his growing awareness of the threat against Romanies in Austria echoes throughout. He details his battle with nightmares and depression in the first chapter of his book: 'Jeden Tag um Mitternacht explodierte die Bombe in meinem Kopf' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 10). Horvath's working through the trauma of the Holocaust and the murder of so many of his relatives in the Third Reich is also very much present in *Katzenstreu* as well as *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*. The efforts to destroy the Romani settlement in Oberwart, first through the deportations during the Third Reich, then with its relocation after the hospital was built, and finally through the 1995 attack, result in a threatening environment. Tina Nardai, an Austrian Romani woman whose experiences as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor are the subject of a short film called 'Meine Zigeunermutter', says of her mother:

Ich wurde in ihrer Angst und in ihrem Leid erzogen. Dafür habe ich sie gehaßt, verflucht und in Gedanken umgebracht. Mein Leid ist ihr Leid... auch die Kinder von Überlebenden sind im KZ. Auch sie sind eingesperrt worden und müssen sich befreien!<sup>24</sup>

This idea of the next generation inheriting Auschwitz also as victims is present in Horvath's text as well. His description of himself as the 'Sprachrohr der vergessenen Roma' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 12) conveys his sense of responsibility to tell about the pain of the victims in the concentration camps and to engage in the 'articulatory practice' of mourning and working through by doing something productive with orientation in the future in remembering and narrating his experience of trauma.<sup>25</sup>

Through the vicious attack on his son and three others, the reality of the position of Romanies in Austrian society is forced upon him. The attack itself and the debates that followed were all sad reminders of the significant support of the radical Right in Austria.<sup>26</sup> Members of the radical Right seized the opportunity to implicate the Romani community as the criminals, intent on depicting the settlement as a hotbed of crime.<sup>27</sup> Horvath himself describes the immediate aftermath of the attack, when the Romani settlement was searched without warning by a hundred police officers. Although there were no drugs or weapons found, an official apology for this search came only a year later (*Katzenstreu*, p. 8). Horvath's personal experience involved a journalist who was intent on establishing a link between Horvath and the crime. 'Er legte mir sogar zur Last, die Lage der Toten verändert und alle Waffen und Drogen im Voraus

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<sup>24</sup>Qutd. in Baumgartner, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup>On this aspect of 'mourning work', see LaCapra, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup>Jacqueline Vansant, *Reclaiming Heimat: Trauma and Mourning in Memoirs by Jewish Austrian Reemigres* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2001), p. 30.

<sup>27</sup>See Britta Kallin's article 'Representing the Roma' for an overview of these allegations. See also Horvath's description of the police coming to search the settlement on the day after the attack, in *Katzenstreu* pp. 7-8.



aus der Siedlung geschafft zu haben, damit bei den Hausdurchsuchungen nichts zu finden sei', he remembers. 'Wieder einmal wurde die Umkehrtheorie bestätigt. Aus den Opfern wurden einfach Täter gemacht' (*Katzenstreu*, pp. 8-9). The discussions among the Austrian people and the reaction of the Austrian media caused Horvath to become more vocal in support of the settlement. In contrast with the other authors discussed in this thesis, Horvath's writing pointedly describes the situation of Romanies in Austria today in terms of dealing with the collective trauma of the Romani Holocaust and its aftermath, the continued disruption of security they face and contemporary interactions with non-Romanies in Austrian society.

Horvath first began writing to address the subjective experience of losing his son which caused him to reflect on the collective traumatic legacy in a way that then becomes politically resonant and productive in the Austrian public sphere. He writes of the moment that defines his personal trauma,

Am Tatort habe ich zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben das Grauen gesehen. Kein Horrorfilm hätte hässlicher sein können. Die vier Toten lagen sternförmig auf der Straße. Einzelne Gliedmaßen waren abgetrennt, die Brustkörbe durch die unheimliche Wucht der Detonation offen, sodass man die inneren Organe sehen konnte. Die Augen der vier waren offen, keine Angst war darin zu sehen. [...] Ich war starr vor Schreck und konnte nicht weinen (*Katzenstreu*, p. 6).

The lack of feeling and emotion behind the description of the bodies in this scene conveys the limits of language Horvath experiences in attempting to describe the full emotional impact it had on him. His comparison with a horror film shows him grasping for something familiar with which to understand this 'Grauen'. Horvath's individual loss is recalled in the opening chapter of *Katzenstreu* when he describes the moment he is first called to the scene where his son is lying dead; he writes how his son's life, first steps and first day of school all ran through his mind. However, he, as the narrator, moves swiftly away from this individual experience:

Gleichzeitig aber ist plötzlich ein riesengroßes Konzentrationslager aufgetaucht. Es war mit einem hohen Stacheldrahtzaun umgeben, und hinter dem Zaun sah ich meine Volksgruppe. Und plötzlich haben die Roma mit mir zu reden, mir von ihrem Leid zu erzählen begonnen und von mir verlangt, dass ich nicht wegschauen solle wie all die anderen Roma zuvor. Im ersten Augenblick glaubte ich an einer Halluzination zu leiden (*Katzenstreu*, p. 6).

Horvath acknowledges that these voices are a hallucination, but the function of telling this memory to the reader is significant. In writing about these voices, he offers a justification for the writing of *Katzenstreu* by assigning a concrete purpose to his writing through the image of the voiceless victims of the Holocaust who ask him to speak for them. This suggests that the Holocaust experience supplies a necessary reason for Romanies to write and publish.

The works of the Philomena Franz, Alfred Lessing, Otto and Marianne Rosenberg, and Ceija and Karl Stojka, suggest that German language Romani writing has been rooted in the

experiences of the concentration camp victims.<sup>28</sup> All of these authors remember initial feelings of shame in the act of writing and voicing their Holocaust memories. Ceija Stojka, in particular, remembers hiding her manuscripts from others and Stefan Horvath also admits: ‘Nur zeigte ich dieses Gedicht niemandem, sondern versteckte es in meiner Garderobe’ (*Katzenstreu*, p. 11). The victims’ voices who urge him not to look away from their suffering ‘wie all die anderen Roma zuvor’, are voices that cannot be denied; the Romani victims, at the time Horvath wrote *Katzenstreu*, were beginning to be accepted in Austrian society and so presented a ‘safe’ narrative justification. As previously discussed with reference to the child’s narrative voice in Otto Rosenberg and Ceija’s Stojka’s texts, there is a tendency in German language Romani narratives to rely on the voice of the victim or one that is completely removed from the ‘asocial’ or ‘criminal’ elements with which Romanies have so long been associated. This indicates a need for Romani writers to feel justified in the act of writing through drawing attention to their suffering in the Third Reich, a cause which is supported by Romani rights organisations and recently encouraged in their home countries through the official recognition of Romani victimisation in the Third Reich. Horvath’s first book dealt directly with imagining the Romani Holocaust, and after the success of *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, Horvath remembers ‘ein Triumph, ein Ausbruch aus einem persönlichen Wellental’, and already has the title of his next book in mind, *Katzenstreu*. The attack against the Romani settlement in Oberwart forced him to confront the connection between the Romani Holocaust and the continued vulnerability of Romanies in Austria; he remembers that ‘von diesem Tag an wagte ich den Schritt in die Öffentlichkeit. Ich spürte plötzlich, dass mir eine Last auferlegt worden ist, und dass ich diese Last auch zu tragen hätte’ (*Katzenstreu*, p. 7). Horvath’s willingness to listen to and acknowledge the Romani Holocaust victims’ voices suggests not only a need for a safe and tested space for his narrative, but also a sense of obligation to the Romanies of Oberwart.

The incorporation of the concentration camp victims who urge Horvath to tell the story of the Romanies from Oberwart plays an important role in Horvath’s narrative as it enables him to address the longer history of Romani persecution in Austria. Assmann’s assertion that land can be reclaimed through the inscription of one’s own stories and memories into the history of the land can be considered in relation to Horvath’s work.<sup>29</sup> In time, Horvath is able to tell his story as part of the history of Austria and is able to see where his own story of the attack on the Oberwart Romani settlement fits by connecting it to the Romani Holocaust. While *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* was marked by Horvath’s releasing of trauma and the initial voicing of the traumatic loss of his son through identifying with the victims in the concentration camps, *Katzenstreu* reveals the author working through a process of mourning and productively engag-

<sup>28</sup>Exceptions can be found in writing by Romanies who have come to Germany and Austria from eastern Europe in the last twenty years and who now write in Romani and German. See Baumgartner, pp. 41-53 for an overview of some of these writers. See also Eder-Jordan, ‘Ausbruch aus der Anonymität’, pp. 72-73.

<sup>29</sup>Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 293.

ing in articulatory practice through revealing the connection between the collective history of Romani persecution and his own personal trauma in the present. *Katzenstreu* is therefore exemplary mourning work, or articulatory practice, because it engages with history by focusing on the memory of the Holocaust, but has its orientation in the future in that Horvath does not fall into the trap of endless grief over the unjust loss of his son. Horvath describes his interactions with the concentration camp victims who offer him reasons to write in order to actively fight the forgetting of the Romanies who never came back to Oberwart:

Sie schilderten mir ihr vergessenes Leid, ihre Sehnsucht nach Liebe, Anerkennung und Geborgenheit [...]. In dieser Nacht bin ich zum ersten Mal ein Sprachrohr der vergessenen Roma geworden. Ich stand auf und schrieb diese Eindrücke nieder. Daraus wurde ein Gedicht. Danach wurde mir leichter, und ich konnte beruhigt einschlafen (*Katzenstreu*, p. 12).

Here, Horvath emphasises his role as a spokesperson for the Romani victims and presents an evaluation of his place in Romani and Austrian society; he also processes the personal trauma which he represents as the continuity of Romani marginalisation and persecution. In this way, Horvath engages in the articulatory practice noted by LaCapra in that he emphasises the importance of being able to recognise the difference between past and present and is able to articulate memory while realising that the future is still viable.<sup>30</sup> Through the act of writing and publishing, Horvath makes a mark on his own future, his people's future, and the future of Austria by forcing society to confront the issues presented in his text. He places his own story and that of his people within the alternate 'we' of his life, Austria.

Reiter's assertion that a loss of identity results in a loss of voice is interesting to consider in relation to Benjamin's observation of the isolation involved in the act of writing.<sup>31</sup> All of the Romani writers discussed in this thesis have described a loss of identity and voice which led to feelings of isolation and resulted in a search for a new mode of articulation. For Romani writers the trauma they have experienced seems to have become a vehicle for writing in order to re-establish a sense of identity that has been disturbed by trauma. Looking at the experiences described by Franz, Stojka and also Horvath, solitude is a necessary component for the re-establishment of identity and the re-construction of a voice. Horvath writes of the hollowness and emptiness he feels in his solitude with his reflections on the murder of his son, but within this processing comes the insight of the outsiders' assertion of Romani identity and thus a clearer sense of his own identity. Out of this sense of rupture, a new self can be built. Horvath's books are a result of what Eder-Jordan pointed out as the 'Einsamkeit' that is behind many Romani writers' books in the wider context of Romani writing in Europe.<sup>32</sup> The fundamental aloneness experienced by these writers bound to their individual and collective trauma is the

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<sup>30</sup>LaCapra, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup>See Reiter, p. 34 and Benjamin, p. 389.

<sup>32</sup>Eder-Jordan, 'Roma Literatur', p. 117.

driving force behind this writing. Horvath writes in the introduction to his text that he tried to escape this 'Einsamkeit': 'in Wahrheit wollte ich nicht alleine sein. Ich wollte vergessen und hatte Angst vor den einsamen Stunden' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 9). In this statement Horvath equates silence with forgetting and writes of the fear he felt at the idea of confronting his traumatic memories. As Benjamin has noted, the act of writing is naturally exclusive of others and Horvath's insistence on justifying his written words by creating the company of the survivors of the Holocaust reveals from a different perspective the insecure space new writing by members of Romani communities in Germany and Austria occupies.<sup>33</sup>

The presentation of the four Romani victims in Oberwart in Horvath's text as well as the forgotten concentration camp victims Horvath wants to have remembered raise the question of LaCapra's idea of a 'founding trauma'. What function do these victims' voices have in Horvath's text and how far do they go to define Romani identity in terms of victimhood? Here is an author who has written a narrative drawing attention to the traumatic past of Romanies in Austria and their continued vulnerability to prejudice and attack, but what Horvath describes also poses the danger of continuing to define Romani identity in terms of their relationship to non-Romanies, now no longer the 'criminal' and 'asocial', but victims. However, I would argue that, similarly to Franz, Horvath resists turning his traumatic experience into as LaCapra warns 'the valorized or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity'.<sup>34</sup> Horvath subverts the notion of founding an identity based on trauma through the act of writing about something that Austrians would rather not have to be reminded of or have to confront. He presents himself as a writer and a member of group that no longer will remain silent victims in the country where they are citizens. As mentioned previously, Jelinek also wrote about the 1995 attack, but Horvath gives a different perspective as he writes about his son, his home (the Romani settlement in Oberwart) and his battle in the aftermath of that attack to have the perpetrator know and feel remorse for the pain that he inflicted on the Romani community. In *Katzenstreu*, Horvath presents a productive fusion of personal and collective memories that are traumatic but that can be negotiated into something positive in the written text. Assmann distinguishes between victims, pointing out that

die Erinnerung an das viktimologische Opfer kann nicht innerhalb der Gruppe der Betroffenen bleiben, sondern verlangt nach Ausweitung ihrer Träger in Form von öffentlicher Anerkennung und Resonanz. Das Zeugnis des vom Trauma gezeichneten Opfers ist angewiesen auf dieses Echo der Resonanz und Rückversicherung in einer ethischen, d.h. Gruppeninteressen übersteigenden Erinnerung.<sup>35</sup>

In writing *Katzenstreu*, Horvath presents himself as someone who is willing to speak, to confront the silence that surrounds prejudice against Romanies in Austria, their victimisation in

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<sup>33</sup> Benjamin, p. 389.

<sup>34</sup> LaCapra, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> Assmann, *Vergangenheit*, p. 77.

the Holocaust, and continued instability in contemporary Austrian society.

Horvath takes the moments of contact, connection, and dialogue noted in the other texts discussed in this thesis further by putting himself into the positions of the other people involved in his traumatic memory, and trying to understand their perspectives. This presents the positive aspects of working through and making a viable future through this process of mourning.<sup>36</sup> Of particular interest is his illustration of the relationship he creates between himself and the perpetrator, Fuchs. While this could be read as a 'founding myth', it is one which rejects trauma and hatred, working instead to address the current situation of Romanies in Austria:

Ich war König und Bettler, Henker und Delinquent, starb bei den Kreuzzügen und wurde wieder geboren. Ich erlebte mehr als zweitausend Jahre Nacht für Nacht wie in einem Zeitraffer. Von Anfang bis Ende in einer ungeheuren Dramatik. Der Attentäter war dabei immer an meiner Seite. Anfangs versuchte er als Freund in meiner Nähe zu kommen, später als Feind. Und immer wieder versuchte er mich zum Zerstören und Töten zu zwingen, so wie er es getan hatte. Doch schließlich war meine Kraft stärker als seine, weil in mir nicht Hass, Zerstörung und Tod im Vordergrund standen (*Katzenstreu*, p. 16).

Here, Horvath describes himself on a journey through time with the perpetrator constantly at his side; it becomes a battle between 'good' and 'evil', with the perpetrator repeatedly trying to get Horvath to engage in violent retribution. Addressing blame and resentment towards the perpetrators has been a common theme in the writing discussed thus far. Franz, Lessing, the Stojkas and the Rosenbergs all include elements of connection with non-Romanies in their writing and convey the necessity of creating a positive collective image and identity for Romanies in their home countries. Matras and Margalit posit that particularly German Sinti communities want to assert their entitlement to live in the country where they and their ancestors have long been residents: '[The Sinti] have tried to persuade the German public that they, the Sinti, constitute an integral part of the German culture and German nation'.<sup>37</sup> I would argue that this is also the case for Romani communities who have resided in Austria for generations; for this reason, there is a certain degree of caution in addressing the role of the perpetrators in these authors' written representations of their memories. However, I would argue that writing in itself provides the 'spurs' of Romani 'Ressentiment'; this provides the documentation of Romani victimisation at the hands of the historically documented perpetrators of the atrocities of the Third Reich.

In *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, one of Horvath's pieces is a letter from a concentration camp prisoner to Hitler. Berger, who edited *Katzenstreu*, has described Horvath's second narrative as his 'Brief an einen Mörder'. Berger writes of the turmoil Horvath felt after the attack which killed his son:

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<sup>36</sup>See LaCapra, p. 70.

<sup>37</sup>See Margalit and Matras, p. 113.

Dass er Angst hatte, wahnsinnig zu werden, erzählt er, dass er sich umbringen wollte, dass er vom toten Adressaten in den verzweifeltsten Stunden seines Lebens gequält und verhöhnt wurde — und dass er, Stefan Horvath, am Ende der Stärkere war, weil er den Hass aus sich verbannen konnte.<sup>38</sup>

The idea of becoming stronger through the process of banishing hatred which Berger mentions in this passage and which is arguably at the core of Horvath's work is a common theme in Romani writing discussed in this thesis, from Franz's 'wenn wir hassen verlieren wir, wenn wir lieben werden wir reich,' to Ceija Stojka's assertion that she feels sympathy for the neo-nazis.<sup>39</sup> There is an emphasis in Horvath's narrative to promote the idea that Horvath is trying to understand the perpetrator in this text as an act of forgiveness, an idea which is expressed in a published interview with Berger.<sup>40</sup> Horvath writes at the end of his book: 'Dieses Buch dokumentiert aber auch, dass ich dem Täter längst vergeben habe, keinen Hass empfinde, wobei es für die Roma selbst und auch für meine Familie nicht leicht ist, das so zu verstehen wie ich' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 98). I would argue that Horvath's writing of the different perspectives in this book, including the attempt to get inside the head of the perpetrator, do not let Franz Fuchs or Austrian society off the hook. His narrative is a dialogue with the perpetrator and in documenting Fuchs's crime, he wants to make sure that the perpetrator is 'goaded by the spurs of his resentment'.<sup>41</sup> Horvath expresses some regret in never having been able to talk to and confront the murderer before Fuchs committed suicide and this narrative allows him the space to force the perpetrator to confront what he did. In this way, Horvath does not allow the attack to become neutralised through time, but wants to remind his readership of what Fuchs did and the turmoil and pain it caused for him, as well as for the Romani settlement in Oberwart. In addition, Horvath forces people to acknowledge the prejudices that still exist in Austria and the events in Austrian history that many would rather had remained muted. He ends his narrative by making clear that the ultimate forgiveness is not in his hands pointing out after saying that it is important to live without hate 'denn irgendwann werden wir alle vor einem höheren Richter stehen' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 98).

## 6.4 Heimat and Romani Identity

Like the other texts discussed in this thesis, Horvath's text also asserts a claim on place and belonging. He places himself within Austrian society through attempts to explore other perspectives of the 1995 attack on the Romani settlement in Oberwart alongside his own. Romani representations of Heimat have been explored throughout this thesis in relation to the authors' portrayals of the natural world and the relationship of Romani identity to the landscapes of

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<sup>38</sup>C. Berger, 'Brief an einen Mörder', p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>*Verborgenen*, p. 146.

<sup>40</sup>C. Berger, 'Being Franz F.', p. 29.

<sup>41</sup>Améry, p. 124.

their home countries. Horvath does not explore representations of the natural world in his text, but does assert a strong sense of connection with the geographical location of the Romani settlement in Oberwart. In his text, Horvath subverts the conservative idea of Heimat by incorporating into his text more universal ideas of home as security and familiarity and placing them in contrast with Fuchs's *Blut und Boden* ideology.

Bound closely to Horvath's search for identity and working through trauma is his relationship with Heimat. His parents returned to Austria after they were released from the concentration camps, similarly to Franz and the Stojkas, who expressed the fact that their natural inclination after being released from the camps was to return 'home'. In fact, most Sinti and Roma who survived the atrocities of the camps made their way back to where they were from in order to search for surviving family members and because no alternative option was made known to them.<sup>42</sup> Ceija Stojka attributes this returning home to the strong connection Romanies feel with the land and the place where their ancestors are buried. Horvath also describes a close relationship with the place he was born and emphasises his closeness to the Roma settlement of his youth. He says that, after the tragedy, moving to the flat in the hospital that had been built over the old settlement was

wie ein Heimkehr: Denn genau dort, wo sich die Dienstwohnung befand, stand bis zum Baubeginn des Krankenhauses die erste Romasiedlung der Nachkriegszeit. Und genau in dieser Romasiedlung, die es nicht mehr gab, wurde ich geboren (*Katzenstreu*, p. 10).

Here we see a more contained space being defined as Heimat, as a specific location where Horvath feels safe and connected with his family. Horvath's concrete idea of returning home to the place he was born even though nothing was left of the settlement that once stood there, illustrates Aleida Assmann's notion of the binding between identity, memory and land. This is reminiscent of Ceija Stojka's strong assertions of connections with Austria through her ancestors being buried in the Austrian soil. Horvath, however, does not use Stojka's natural images to convey Austria as his homeland, but rather highlights the people, towns and situations that make up the Austrian landscape. I would argue that his primary bond is with the Romani settlement that once stood in the place of the hospital and the Austrian Romani community it seems to represent for him. There is a strong sense in his writing that what is at stake in his work is the building of a more positive identity for and the assurance of a safe place for Austrian Romanies.

It is useful to consider here Améry's concept of Heimat and the question he poses of 'wieviel Heimat braucht der Mensch?' As a preliminary answer to this question, he ventures to assert 'um so mehr, je weniger davon er mit sich tragen kann. Denn es gibt ja so etwas wie mobile Heimat oder zumindest Heimatersatz'.<sup>43</sup> He goes on to cite religion or money as examples

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<sup>42</sup>Rosenhaft, 'The Gypsy's Revenge', p. 408.

<sup>43</sup>Améry, p. 78

of *Heimatersatz*, but it is interesting to consider the idea of mobile Heimat in relation to the experience of Austrian Romanies, or Romanies in general who traditionally were a travelling people. Certainly Ceija and Karl Stojka, Lessing and Franz describe a degree of what might be considered mobile Heimat when they talk of the togetherness of the family, life on the road and the music and storytelling that was part of this life. Horvath, however, who was born and spent most of his life in Oberwart emphasises home as a specific place in Austria. The Romani settlement in its various re-locations is prevalent both in *Katzenstreu* and in *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*. Through his writing, Horvath urges readers to respect the place Romanies occupy in Austria. Heimat, as it is conveyed in Horvath's text, is not only the physical place mentioned above but also the feeling of safety and trust which was destroyed by the bomb attack which killed his son.

Améry's view of Heimat as security which has been applied to all of the other texts discussed in this thesis is useful in reference to Horvath's work. In Horvath's writing too there is an emphasis placed on the feeling of *Geborgenheit*, and his trauma comes principally from the destruction of that feeling when the Romani settlement where his family lives is threatened by the bomb attack and its aftermath. Through this experience, he is forced to question the place of Romanies in Austria. Horvath writes of the comfort of routine, an example of what Améry calls 'Kennen-Erkennen' when he recalls his actions on the fifth of February after visiting the crime scene:

Ich habe meine Familie alleine am Tatort zurückgelassen und bin, so wie jeden Sonntag zuvor, ins Kaffeehaus gefahren, habe wie üblich zwei Kaffee getrunken, aber niemandem erzählt, was sich gerade in der Nähe der Romasiedlung abspielt. Kein Wort von einer Bombe und den vier Opfern, kein Wort, das mein Sohn eines davon ist. Ich war außen hin wie immer (*Katzenstreu*, p. 7).

The familiarity of the surroundings and the distance from the reality that this normalcy achieves offers him the sense of an unchanged, trusted environment free from threat. After he is forced to deal with the crime, he finds comfort living in the hospital which had been built over the Romani settlement of his youth. He identifies himself with and feels *Geborgenheit* in the place where he was born which is bound with the memories he has of growing up there.

Améry also addresses the loss of identity that comes with the loss of security or Heimat. He expresses his alienation from himself and from any sense of community by saying 'ich war kein Ich mehr und lebte nicht in einem Wir'.<sup>44</sup> Horvath's writing conveys a strong sense of 'wir' in the sense of Romani people, but his use of 'wir' does not extend to include the generality of Austrians. Aware of the enemy Franz Fuchs, and the 'Blut und Boden' ideology of Heimat that was at the core of Fuchs's actions, Horvath confronts this conservative notion of homeland in his text, only allowing for the sense of *Geborgenheit* within the Romani community without necessarily furthering his concept of Heimat to the broader landscape of Austria in the way that

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<sup>44</sup>Améry, p. 78.



Lessing, the Stojkas and Franz do particularly through their use of images of the natural world. When he writes of imagining a meeting with his enemy, he describes the noise of the prisoner's feet in chains as 'ein eigenartiges, schleifendes Geräusch am Boden, als würdest du den Boden vom Blut deiner Opfer säubern' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 35). These references to cleaning the blood of his victims from the ground evokes the 'Blut und Boden' notion of Heimat. Cleansing Austria from the people who were not 'real Austrians' was the motivation for Franz Fuchs's attacks.<sup>45</sup> Although Horvath makes it clear that his writing and confrontations with the perpetrator are ways of interacting with and confronting the man who killed his son, there is a clear 'we' in his text that refers to the Romani population in Austria rather than a 'we' that refers to Austrians in general. Horvath clearly asserts his identity as an Austrian Romani citizen.

In his discussion of the idea of Heimat, Peter Blickle speaks of 'the longing for a specific, differentiated sheltering space [...] everywhere in German culture, whether it receives in every instance the name of Heimat or not'.<sup>46</sup> I think that Horvath extracts this part of the idea of Heimat, the longing for a sheltering space, or as Améry talked about the security that is at the core of the feeling of Heimat<sup>47</sup> and which is perhaps more universal than what is understood as the traditional conservative definition of the term as defined by events throughout history. Boa and Palfreyman write of the problematic relationship between the idea of homeland and national identity speaking of the stereotype of the assimilated western Jew 'who without roots in Heimat or a national identity of his own, might infiltrate and undermine German national identity'.<sup>48</sup> Romanies in Austria could have been described in the same way according to this ideology of Heimat, as being without a national identity and without roots in Heimat. However I would argue that Horvath takes the part of Heimat that is universal in his text (the need for safety, security and place) and holds it up against the traditional idea of Heimat and its manifestation in the attack by Franz Fuchs. He does not do this in the same way as Franz and Ceija Stojka, who highlighted the Romani relationship with nature, inscribing their Romani identity into the landscapes of their homelands, but offers a more contemporary location of *Geborgenheit* within the feeling of Romani community, here particularly in the Romani settlement in Oberwart and asserts space for them within the Austrian landscape. In an interview with Berger, Horvath spoke of the settlement and how it has changed:

Die Bewohner der Siedlung sind nicht mehr stumm. Sie reden. Ich bin anfangs in den eigenen Reihen geprügelt worden, weil ich Tabuthemen ansprach, die den Roma wehtaten. Etwa die Öffnung der Siedlung, und zwar im Kopf. Ich meinte, es sei nicht wichtig, wie weit man von einem bestimmten Mittelpunkt einer Stadt entfernt ist, sondern wichtig wäre, an ihm teilzuhaben. Ein Kilometer oder ein Meter Entfernung vom Zentrum ist da egal.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Kallin, p.174.

<sup>46</sup>Blickle, p. 6

<sup>47</sup>Améry, p. 82.

<sup>48</sup>See Boa and Palfreyman, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup>C. Berger, 'Being Franz F.', p. 33

Horvath advocates a safe place for Romanies within Austria where they would be free to speak and to reveal their Romani identity. He does not necessarily speak out for the 'integration' of the Roma settlement, but rather fights for its honour and its right to be accepted, not to be pushed away to the outskirts and criminalised.

In Horvath's text, he tries to get inside the head of the perpetrator and in doing so explores some of the more conservative ideas of Heimat that he feels were at the core of Franz Fuchs's ideology and motivation for his bomb attacks. Horvath focuses primarily on his inner battle with the perpetrator and trying to understand the perspectives of the non-Romanies involved in the situation. In one of the first interactions with the perpetrator which Horvath describes in *Katzenstreu*, a chapter titled 'Rhapsodie in Blue', he recounts an imaginary visit from Fuchs:

Er erzählt von seiner hoffnungslosen Liebe zu einem Mädchen. Von der Sehnsucht nach Wärme und Geborgenheit, vom Traum, irgendwann eine Familie zu gründen. Er schwärmt vom Duft der Blumen im Sommer, auf einer Wiese zu liegen und den Schmetterlingen und Bienen zuzusehen. Vom Gesang der Vögel, die ihm ständig die 'Rhapsodie in Blue' vorjubilierten (*Katzenstreu*, p. 27).

This passage is reminiscent particularly of Stojka or Franz's writing with its description of the natural world with flowers and singing birds. Here, however, these images are not used to portray traditional Romani life as in their narratives; rather, Horvath connects with the more problematic notion of Heimat as a concept of provincial 'purity'. In order to describe the mentality of the perpetrator, he captures the conservative view of Heimat in this passage with the pure image of nature and family. There are far fewer references in Horvath's narrative to nature than were found in Franz's and Stojka's writings, and the ones he uses are implemented in a more critical way. His generation grew up in the settlement rather than on the road and therefore might have a different relationship to the land and to nature. Whereas the Stojkas were still able to remember and describe life on the road, Horvath grew up in the settlement in Oberwart; the Romani community and way of life in that community defined Romani identity for him. He worked in Vienna and commuted between Oberwart and Vienna, but otherwise led a settled life.<sup>50</sup> Significant in Horvath's text, however, is his subversion of the conservative notion of Heimat through applying the elements of security and *Geborgenheit* as part of Romani identity in this new, settled life in Austria.

Like Franz, he also seeks to establish a sense of common past and origin by alluding to India as the place of Romani origin. He describes a vision he has of a journey in time with an unnamed 'friend'. The friend takes him to India on a *Zeitreise* and acts as a guide to Horvath's distant past:

Hier, das ist Indien. Das ist die Heimat deiner Vorfahren. Und hier befindet sich schon ein Teil deines Volkes auf dem Weg nach Europa. Die Hoffnung auf eine bessere Zukunft treibt sie an. Hier, in Indien, gibt es nichts, was für sie Zukunft

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<sup>50</sup>C. Berger, 'Brief an einen Mörder', p. 2.

hieße. Und unter diesen vielen Menschen, die Richtung Europa wandern, wird auch die Generation sein, aus der du hervorgehen wirst (*Katzenstreu*, p. 58).

This friend then continues the journey with Horvath, pointing out how Romanies were treated badly and marginalised when they arrived in Europe in the same way they had been in India. Bengsch has noted that the Romani quest for a collective identity is accompanied by basic historical questions ‘die sich jede Romni, jede Sintiza, jeder Rom und jeder Sinto, ja alle Angehörigen dieses Volkes, stellen: ‘Woher kommen wir? Was sind wir? Wohin wollen wir?’.<sup>51</sup> These questions for unearthing a common past and a collective identity for the future can be found in the *Zeitreise* section of Horvath’s narrative. The ‘friend’, who turns out to be death, takes Horvath through the Romani settlement of Oberwart to which Horvath’s parents return, his mother from Ravensbrück, his father from Mauthausen, and continues to the night of February 4, 1995 where Horvath is told that his son ‘wird in wenigen Augenblicken diese Tafel berühren und mit seinen Freunden tatsächlich den Rückweg nach Indien antreten. [...] Jetzt sind sie tot! Und das Blut rinnt aus ihren Körpern! Schau jetzt nicht weg! Du hast es ja so gewollt’ (*Katzenstreu*, p. 59). Here, Death points out the weaknesses in the common origin and the beginning of the journey in India by saying that his son and three friends are going back there. While this image of Death being the constant companion of Romani experience could be seen as a founding trauma, I would argue that Horvath uses it in his text to engage in ‘articulatory practice’ and to educate the reader about the past suffering of Romanies and their Indian origin. He seeks to establish Romani identity as having a history; Horvath, in including this passage in *Katzenstreu* emphasises the threatening landscape in which Romanies live in Austria and in Europe, pointing out the fragile and unstable space they occupy in history.

## 6.5 Genre and Literary Qualities in *Katzenstreu*

As previously discussed, Stefan Horvath uses an array of different perspectives to tell the story of what happened to his son and three others when they tried to dismantle the racist sign Franz Fuchs had erected on the outskirts of the Romani settlement. This narrative style strays from the predominantly linear remembering of events that has characterised previous narratives by Franz and Ceija Stojka, but is more similar in its experimental structure to Karl Stojka’s *Auf der ganzen Welt zuhause*. Important to consider is Horvath’s interaction with the themes of truth and memory in this narrative and his self-conscious role as the author; these factors call into question his reliability and responsibility to the truth. He begins the narrative by stating, ‘dies ist eine wahre Geschichte’ (*Katzenstreu*, p. 5) and ends by saying, ‘dieses Buch erhebt keinen Anspruch auf Wahrheit. Es zeigt lediglich, wie es sein hätte können oder vielleicht auch nicht’ (*Katzenstreu*, p. 98). In these two passages, Horvath interacts directly with the

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<sup>51</sup>Bensch, p. 55.

reader, confronting any scepticism about February 4, 1995, that the reader might bring to the text, and calling into question Philippe Lejeune's accepted 'autobiographical pact'.<sup>52</sup> From the very first line, Horvath invites the reader to take part in this autobiographical pact, assuring them that they will be told a story that is true. After the story has been told, he absolves himself of this responsibility by saying that he does not claim responsibility for telling the truth but clarifies that he has written a truth, a version of the truth.

The use of different perspectives to tell what is essentially Horvath's story raises the question of style and genre in his text. As will be detailed more thoroughly in the last section of this chapter, which discusses the reception context of *Katzenstreu* in Austria, his text has been received as an important reminder for the Austrian people of the act of racist violence committed there as recently as twelve years ago. I would argue that this reception imposes an outside categorisation of the text as authentic and historically true. What role then does the more sophisticated style of Horvath's narrative play? Jean Starobinski writes in 'The Style of Autobiography' that 'style, as an original quality, accentuating as it does the importance of the present in the act of writing, seems to serve the conventions of narrative, rather than the realities of reminiscence'.<sup>53</sup> He goes on to conclude that 'no matter how doubtful the facts related, the text will at least present an "authentic" image of the man who "held the pen"'.<sup>54</sup> I would argue that Horvath's act of writing is equally important to the content of what he writes. In the same way that Kushner emphasised the importance of remembering the author in Holocaust testimony, writing that contains, as Horvath's text does, an alert to the 'threat of Auschwitz' should be considered for its significance as an act of writing as well. Crucially, Horvath's book is his vision of truth — that filling in of the blanks in the situation, which allows him to work through his traumatic memories and experiences of turmoil and shattered identity. The connection has been drawn through the 1995 attack to fit it into the rest of his life, history and experience from the beginning until the end. His struggle to gain understanding lines itself up in *Katzenstreu*, breaking up the cycle of 'Zerstörung'.

Horvath's narrative does not adhere to the linear narrative structure characteristic of traditional autobiographical writing. Stylistically, Horvath takes advantage of the known outcomes of the situation and uses this lack of need for plot in order to explore the circumstances that led up to and surrounded the attack of February 5, 1995. He divides the book into short chapters, each told from a different perspective, using the first person narrative voice for his own perspective as well as that of the perpetrator, Franz Fuchs. In doing so, he sets himself up directly against the perpetrator and blends the lines between the victim and the perpetrator, thus highlighting the crucial differences of character between the two sides. For example, in the

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<sup>52</sup>Lejeune, pp. 3-30.

<sup>53</sup>Jean Starobinski, 'The Style of Autobiography', in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), pp. 73-84. Here, p. 75.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

chapter called 'Einsamkeit' which begins, 'wenn der Tag beginnt, beginnt auch meine grenzlose Einsamkeit. So etwas kann nur der verstehen, der mir in solch schweren Stunden zur Seite steht' (*Katzenstreu*, p. 71). Here, it is initially unclear who is speaking. The isolation the narrator describes evokes sympathy in the reader, who in turn hopes that the narrator of these thoughts is Horvath. However, as the narrative continues, it becomes apparent that it is the voice of the perpetrator:

Wer ist er, der mir einen Besuch abstattet? [...] Er ist der, der mich gelehrt hat, wie man gegen die Eindringliche in meinem Land kämpft. In einem Land, wo nur mehr Fremde, Parasiten und Asoziale den Ton angeben und niemand außer ihm und mir bereit ist, den Kampf gegen diese Ungerechtigkeit aufzunehmen (*Katzenstreu*, p. 71).

The reliability of all the narrative voices can be questioned in this text, from the first person narrations and the dialogues between the card-players in the *Wirtshaus*, to the third person perspective of Fuchs's parents facing the idea that their son is different. The shifting narrative voices offer a sample of the flexible narrative boundaries that Laura Marcus speaks of in relation to autobiography when she points out that 'recounting one's own life almost inevitably entails writing the life of an other or others; writing the life of another must surely entail the biographer's identifications with his or her subject, whether these are made explicit or not'.<sup>55</sup> Horvath uses these identifications with others to reveal his own experiences and the situation of Romanies in Austria.

When compared with the texts written by Franz and Cejja Stojka, striking in Horvath's texts is the absence of the contributions from non-Romani figures vouching for the authenticity and reliability of the author. Whether this is due to the fact that Horvath himself precludes the necessity for validation by not claiming to be telling the truth about the event in his text and not using the text to testify for the sake of history, or whether it was felt that his writing can stand on its own, is of course difficult to determine. Perhaps because the attack of February 4, 1995 was discussed and talked about in the Austrian press and in society, there was less of an imperative to shed light on what actually happened and the historical correctness of those events, whereas this imperative is most certainly a key element in the writings of Stojka, Franz and other Romani Holocaust survivors. The question of why this work can stand alone, however, is part of a larger question regarding the genre of the narrative. Is *Katzenstreu* then not to be considered an autobiographical work, telling the truth about Horvath's life in some way? Or does the absence of 'academic' validation indicate that this work should be or is considered fictional? Through his exploration of different perspectives, Horvath seems to stray from the confines of autobiography and uses methods employed in fiction to tell his story. I would argue that it is important to consider Eakin's point that 'the autobiographical truth to

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<sup>55</sup>Marcus, p. 274.

which the Autobiographer refers is his or her intention'.<sup>56</sup> As discussed in previous sections on Heimat and trauma, when we think of *Katzenstreu* as a work that uses its role of writing through trauma and fighting for a more positive identity for Romanies in Austria, the explorations of the other frames of mind which shape his experience of Austria are very much autobiographical. Berger writes, 'die Zeit, die ihm gegeben ist, wurde von der Geschichte berührt. Er wollte es nicht, aber er muss sich zu dem, was geschah und geschieht, verhalten. Stefan Horvath tut das auf seine Weise: Er spricht, und er schreibt'.<sup>57</sup> This implication that some interaction with the event is necessary on Horvath's part is an important observation and ties in with the idea of intention. One could argue that everyone's life is touched by history, but this increases the importance of Horvath's decision to take the bold step of writing and investigating the truths of the situation.

An interesting explanation for this choice of balance between truth and fiction lies in Horvath's own reason for writing. He says in an interview with Clemens Berger:

Das Schreiben ist für mich wie eine Befreiung der Seele. Hier kann ich alles ausleben, was wahr ist, und alles, was nicht wahr ist. Es ist ein Spiel mit der Fantasie. Was wäre, wenn? Wie hätte es sein können? Man kann meine Theorie nicht bestätigen, aber auch nicht widerlegen.<sup>58</sup>

This explanation is noteworthy in its suggestion of the safety of writing a narrative that rests between the obligations of fiction and fact. The idea of nobody being able to confirm or contradict his explorations or perceptions of people's thoughts could be said to be a comforting aspect of writing. It is perhaps not surprising in a work that seeks to establish a positive sense of identity for the author and the Romani people to use a tentative approach to writing. It recalls the sense of caution discussed previously in his choice to write *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz* before *Katzenstreu*, a piece of writing that did not break new ground in its subject matter.

It could then be argued that in exploring the perspectives of other people in his text, Horvath calls into question the description of his own experience — if those perspectives are imagined, then it could be that his own is also created. Marcus writes that 'the importance of autobiography/confession is the subjective vision and quest for the self which are fruitfully extended to the novel, but in the process "clear distinction" between the confession and the novel can no longer be sustained'.<sup>59</sup> Horvath's writing has his own anguish of losing his son at its core, but the first person narration in the text is very rarely the voice of Horvath himself, and mostly represents the voice of the perpetrator. As previously mentioned, he uses 'I' when he enters the mind of the perpetrator, and uses third person narration for the scenes involving other characters, thus accentuating the dialogue between the victim and the perpetrator. In this way, the writing style used by Horvath challenges the borders of genre boundaries. Eakin argues that

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<sup>56</sup>Eakin, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup>C. Berger, 'Brief an einen Mörder', p. 3.

<sup>58</sup>C. Berger, 'Being Franz F.', p. 30.

<sup>59</sup>Marcus, p. 235.

‘the self that is the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure’.<sup>60</sup> Horvath seems to play with this notion in his narrative, using the two first-person narrators to show the way that he had become consumed by thoughts about the perpetrator immediately after losing his son. Susanna Egan takes the idea of the fictional self further and points out that the autobiographer, who is ‘unable to lift anything out of life and into art without transforming it [...] creates [...] a fictive self to narrate the events of his life and a fictive story to contain those events’.<sup>61</sup> This could be said to fit Horvath’s narrative in that in order to tell his own story, Horvath feels he must visit the perspectives of the others involved. When Berger asked Horvath about when began to write, Horvath stated ‘erst als ich mental stark genug war, konnte ich das Buch fertig stellen’.<sup>62</sup> This contradicts the image of a writer releasing his trauma and presents the picture of a more reflective author engaging in a progressive form of articulatory practice. In this way, Horvath is able to connect his personal trauma of losing his son with the Romani Holocaust and the current situation of Romanies in Austria.

## 6.6 Reception Context

Since the publication of *Katzenstreu*, Stefan Horvath has given many readings throughout Austria to promote his writing. This is significant considering it was published by a small publishing company, lex liszt, and was, as Wolfgang Wiesgram wrote in *Der Standard* in February 2007,

eine beeindruckende, berührende Geschichte, an deren Erscheinen die literarischen Förderstellen des Burgenlandes und der Republik gänzlich unschuldig sind. Nur die Grüne Bildungswerkstatt unterstützte den feinen burgenländischen Verlag dabei, Horvaths Geschichte unter die Leute zu bringen, die im Grunde dazu da wäre, den aktuellen politischen Protagonisten um die Ohren geknallt zu werden.<sup>63</sup>

After the lack of support in getting the narrative published, it is significant to note the number of readings Horvath has been invited to give and the positive reception of his book in general.

Perhaps most notably, he gave a reading which was held on 25 May 2007, in the ‘Palais Epstein’ next to the Parliament in Vienna which was hosted by *Nationalratspräsidentin*, Eva Glawischnig-Piescek. The event was also significant as it was the first reading that she had hosted in her position as *Nationalratspräsidentin* and, in her opening words, she emphasised that it had been important to her to highlight the variety of contributions to Austrian culture from minority groups within Austria. She also asserted the necessity for remembering the act of prejudice and violence which occurred on February 4, 1995. The high-profile status of this event and the welcoming reception of Horvath’s book here sets the tone for the way it has so far been received in Austria. As the invitation by Eva Glawischnig-Piescek and her opening

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<sup>60</sup>Eakin, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup>Egan, p. 66-67.

<sup>62</sup>C. Berger, ‘Being Franz F’, p. 30.

<sup>63</sup>Wolfgang Weisgram, ‘Erzählen wider das Ignorieren’, *Der Standard*, 6 February 2007, p. 31.

words suggest, his work is not necessarily seen in terms of being a literary achievement, but is important for its political impact. Of note here is the attitude in Austria (officially, at least) towards the attack on February 4, 1995 during its aftermath. The words delivered by Bundespräsident Heinz Fischer at the tenth memorial event on February 4, 2005, are useful to capture the prevailing attitude. The official report on [www.hofburg.at](http://www.hofburg.at) reports:

das Attentat habe ihn [Fischer] deshalb so aufgewühlt, weil neben Menschenleben auch die Überzeugung zerstört worden sei, dass — mit einer einzigen Ausnahme in den sechziger Jahren — ‘die Zweite Republik die Tötung aus politischem Hass nicht gekannt hat’. Vier Menschen seien wegen ihrer Volksgruppenzugehörigkeit als Roma getötet worden: ‘Das war wirklich ein Schock, auch ein Kulturbruch’ so Fischer.<sup>64</sup>

These comments by the Austrian President get to the core of Austria’s reaction to this attack and convey the shock felt that such an act could take place in Austria. Indeed, Erika Thurner writes that ‘funeral ceremonies for the murdered men turned into a public demonstration of solidarity. Solidarity with the Roma — against their persecutors and murderers — that has never happened before!’<sup>65</sup> The remarks made by Heinz Fischer also show that there was a space, a need, for Horvath’s book, which has been well received and publicised as a document that makes a political statement and forces Austria to remember the act of violence that occurred on February 4, 1995. Horvath states himself that he wants to prevent the act from being forgotten among Romanies in Austria. His writing therefore serves the purpose of combatting the forgetting of the persecution to which Romanies in Austria have been subjected. This is a point that is not covered by the other formal reactions to this text which call for Austria to remember, but don’t necessarily include consideration for Austrian Romanies and their reactions to the text. It is not known, and would be difficult to determine, how many Romanies have read Horvath’s book and what kind of impact it would have on their communities in Austria. At the reading at the Palais Epstein, Horvath was supported by Romani musicians who played to begin the evening and also featured in the middle of the performance. The reading was well attended by members of his family and members from the Romano Centro. Whether the text has reached others in the Romani community beyond the more educated and politically active members is difficult to assess so soon after its publication.

Is it useful, then, to consider Stefan Horvath’s writing in terms of aesthetic literary value? Stefan Horvath does not portray himself as someone who writes for the sake of writing, but rather because he has a very specific story to tell. In describing how he writes, he implies a sense of duty and obligation to the story itself: ‘Ich muss aufstehen, dann setze ich mich zum Tisch und beginne zu schreiben. Und ich höre erst auf, wenn diese Geschichte fertig ist’.<sup>66</sup> The sense of obligation to the story corroborates the idea that Clemens Berger and Eva

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Präsidenschaftskanzlei der Republik Österreich’, [www.hofburg.at](http://www.hofburg.at) [accessed 3 March 2008].

<sup>65</sup> Thurner, p. xvii.

<sup>66</sup> See <http://burgenland.orf.at/magazin/imland/thema/stories/169388/> [accessed 12 February 2008].



Glawischnig-Piescek highlight, which is the importance and significance of Horvath's work as a political work that combats forgetting and which forces remembering. This is similar to the way that Philomena Franz's work and Ceija Stojka's books were promoted and discussed in newspaper articles and announcements. Newspaper reviews and articles promoting *Katzenstreu* and Horvath's readings around Austria include interviews with Horvath about the attack and his relationship with the perpetrator, but say very little about the style of his writing. Most do highlight the brave step Horvath took in employing different perspectives in his narrative, particularly the view of the perpetrator, but mostly to emphasise the true horror of what happened.<sup>67</sup> Wolfgang Weisgram, in his review in *Der Standard* in February, 2007, provides an exception to this when he discusses Horvath's style and the literary significance of the text: 'Denn Stefan Horvath ist ein Erzähler. Und als solcher hat er für die ureigenste Kultur seiner Volksgruppe eine neue, faszinierende Erzählform gefunden'.<sup>68</sup> In writing this, Weisgram encourages the step from oral tradition to written for Austrian Romanies and implies that Horvath's work is enough of a reason to do so. Wolfram's statement gives Horvath's work credit which other reviews and journalists do not — he sees the significance of this text for Romanies in Austria.

## 6.7 Threatening Landscapes

The threat from the more conservative concept of *Heimat* against the vulnerability of the Roma settlement in Oberwart, literalised in the destructions of this location of home and its relocations over the years, constitute the 'threat of Auschwitz' in Horvath's text. By incorporating the voices of those who never returned from Auschwitz as the key element that unlocks the text and releases the story of February 4, 1995, Horvath raises many questions for the reader as to the function of this distinct presence of Auschwitz. I think that this presence reveals a certain insecurity in writing, as the voices of the hitherto silent concentration camp victims are employed in this text in order to supply a concrete justification for its writing. This suggests the idea that the Holocaust experience itself offers a justification for making the transition from an oral to a written tradition for Romanies. All of the works examined in this thesis focus on the Romani Holocaust.

Horvath's willingness to listen to and to acknowledge the voices of the victims suggests not only a need for a safe and tested space for his narrative, but also an obligation to his people, a political reason for writing that runs throughout the narrative, rather than a purely personal motivation for writing and working through an individual trauma. The 'threat of Auschwitz' in Horvath's text reveals the vulnerability of the position of Romanies in Austria and their lack of secure space within the landscape of Austria.

<sup>67</sup>See Berger 'Brief an einen Mörder' and 'Being Franz F'.

<sup>68</sup>Weisgram, p. 31.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion: Moving beyond Memory

Through exploring themes such as landscape, space, Heimat, the communication of memory, generational memory and the narration of traumatic Holocaust experience, this thesis has revealed diverse representations of Romani identity in Germany and Austria in writing spurred on and influenced by the events of the Holocaust; these works present counter-images to the long-held notions of 'Zigeuner' in Germany and Austria. This study brings together for the first time a selection of Romani writers and provides an in-depth analysis of the key issues of Romani identity and Holocaust memory found in their autobiographical works. Apparent in each narrative discussed in this thesis is an urgency to communicate the writers' memories and to highlight aspects of their individual and group identities in order to reveal the diversity of Romani communities in Germany and Austria and to create a safer space for the expression of this diversity in these countries. In 1993, Eder concluded her study of Romani literature, *Geboren bin ich vor Jahrtausenden*, with the hope that Romani literature would work towards combatting the loss and destruction of Romani culture:

Es ist zweifellos so, daß die Kultur der Roma weltweit vom Zerfall bedroht ist (Auflösung der Sippen-Strukturen, Verlust traditioneller Berufe, Diskriminierung durch die Mehrheitsbevölkerung — daher: Verleugnung der Identität und Sprache, etc.), gleichzeitig dürfte es aber in den nächsten Jahren (und Jahrzehnten) zu einer verstärkten literarischen Produktion der Roma kommen: Intensivere Schulbildung, die Aktivitäten von Roma, die Aktivitäten von Roma Komitees und die Beispielwirkung bereits existierender Roma-Literatur weisen darauf hin.<sup>1</sup>

This anxiety over the loss of Romani traditions and language within the writers' home countries is a recurring theme in the narratives discussed in this thesis.

The continued lack of a safe and protective space for self-realisation, as well as a secure environment for Romanies to live in their home countries, is evident in all of the texts discussed here. The denial of Romani identity has been explored in this thesis particularly in relation to work by Alfred Lessing, who addresses denial of Romani identity through fear and the need

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<sup>1</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 232.

for self-preservation. Indeed, Ceija Stojka points out the continuing relevance of this denial when recalling that her son was fired from the bakery where he worked after his employers discovered he was a 'Zigeuner'; at the time of publication (1988), Stojka writes that her niece continued to deny her Romani identity in her job as a secretary for fear she would be fired. Karl Stojka explores the loss of Romani traditions in Austria and elsewhere that he traces back to the extermination of so many Romani lives in the Holocaust. Ceija Stojka writes with urgency about preserved Romani identity: 'Alle von uns wollen Rom bleiben'.<sup>2</sup> Romani writing in Germany and Austria has an integral function for its writers as a way of engaging in what they feel is a necessary dialogue with the majority populations in their homelands in order to continue to strive for a safe creative space in which to conduct the internal dialogue of defining and attempting to preserve Romani tradition in modern times. This dialogue might then work towards establishing a safe territorial space for Romanies in these countries.

In analysing the themes of the Holocaust and Romani identity found in these texts in terms of theoretical approaches relating to trauma, memory, Heimat, and genre, this thesis expands the existing Holocaust canon, while emphasising the individuality and uniqueness of these Romani narratives. This study explores the uniqueness of these texts, and devotes space to the work of each author selected in order to examine the extent to which they 'mark' their Holocaust experience as Romani through their use of language and through their specific memories of victimisation, including shame, humiliation and loss of honour, that worked to destroy Romani cultural identity. These narratives aim to shatter the popular notion of Romanies as being *sorglos*, *heimatslos*, *ortlos*, and without history. The texts moreover articulate the assertion of historical agency by appropriating the German language written tradition in order to record Romani memory of the *Porrajmos* and to illustrate aspects of Romani culture in Germany and Austria. The number of narratives written in the past twenty-five years indicates that many Romanies wish to engage in dialogue with non-Romanies in order to preserve their memories as part of the larger histories of the country and, with caution, they seek to present non-Romanies with a more accurate representation of Romani identity. As Kapralski has indicated, a pattern for communicating memories of the Holocaust has not been established among Romani families.<sup>3</sup> In narratives like Marianne Rosenberg's *Kokolores* and Stefan Horvath's *Ich war nicht in Auschwitz*, this lack of a pattern for communicating memories of trauma can be felt as both authors try to cope with their parents' silence and the absence of family members in a community that relies heavily on the family structure for a feeling of security and belonging.

Evident in all of the texts I have looked at is an engagement with the contemporary atmosphere of forgetting with which these writers contended. It is evident in these authors' 'working through' of trauma, as they try to voice experiences for which they have not been offered a vo-

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<sup>2</sup>C. Stojka, *Verborgenen*, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup>Kapralski, p. 217.

cabulary by an official discourse on the subject of Romani victimisation in the Holocaust. I have analysed all of the texts discussed in this thesis by questioning to what extent they exemplify LaCapra's concept of 'working through' trauma through the act of engaging in narrative and testifying to the horrors experienced and witnessed in the Holocaust. Particularly in narratives by Franz and Ceija Stojka, which were presented as therapeutic exercises in confronting their traumatic memories, this proved a useful method for determining the role trauma played in the writing of their texts, and their representations of concentration camp experiences and Romani identity. In narratives by Lessing and Karl Stojka, which stated as their aim the desire to reveal positive aspects of Romani cultural identity, the evidence of traumatic marking and the attempts to still work through these by creating coherent narratives of their Holocaust memories was important to consider in light of the attention they wanted to draw to the Romani Holocaust. As stated in regard to Otto Rosenberg's text, working through trauma proved to be more difficult when presented with oral testimony which had been filtered to an unknown extent by the transcriber, Ulrich Enzensberger. However, in the transcription and narrative of Rosenberg's memories, there was evidence of the attempts to work through and to create the narrative of a history against the force of forgetting. Marianne Rosenberg and Stefan Horvath both deal differently with the traumatic experiences of their peoples' past victimisation in the Holocaust and reveal the marking of trauma which has been passed down to the second generation.

The importance of examining how the authors work through traumatic memories in their texts can be illustrated through Kushner's observation that

at present, victim testimony is almost exclusively, if well-meaningly, used to provide supplementary forms of Holocaust representation that serve the purpose of either giving a human face to the millions murdered or to show the vileness of what was done to them. The challenge now is to confront the testimony of the victims both qualitatively (dealing with less in terms of the life stories represented can, in this case, mean much more in relation to the engagement with the material) and reflectively (acknowledging context and genre, even in the most apparently simple accounts).<sup>4</sup>

As I have explored in reference to all of the texts discussed in this thesis, the authors reveal much more about their individual experience than would be considered necessary for the documenting of testimony for historical purposes. Their working through the traumatic memories they narrate in their texts reveals a personal process and marks their stories with the individuality of their experience and the context of their Romani background and heritage. In testing the boundaries of genre and exploring the space which 'autobiography' or 'life writing' offer, these authors are able to record their memories of the Holocaust and inscribe their own stories into the history of their home countries.<sup>5</sup> As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis,

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<sup>4</sup>Kushner, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>See Marcus, p. 288-294 on life writing and its potential for creating narratives for marginalised groups.

Solms points out that the written narrative need not be created in opposition to the Romani oral tradition, but can arise and continue from this long storytelling history.<sup>6</sup> The writing that has emerged in the last twenty-five years can then be seen as a continuation of a long narrative tradition which mixes the older Romani tradition with the 'newer' registering of the Holocaust experience in written (as well as oral) form. In this way, a continuity can be noted in Romani tradition which predates the Holocaust and carries through to the representation and working through of the traumatic experiences of the concentration camps.

Tebbutt concluded her study *Sinti and Roma in German-speaking Society and Literature* with the observation that 'much work needs to be done on charting the comparisons between the experiences of Roma in different European countries and how the language, culture and literature have developed in each country against varying socio-political backgrounds'.<sup>7</sup> In focusing particularly on German and Austrian autobiographical narratives, I have been able to explore the strong identification with geographical location found in all of these narratives and the writers' assertions of themselves as citizens of those countries. The experience of the Holocaust and the memory of it through the creation of written texts has marked these authors' representations of Heimat and landscape. Their relationship to their home countries is bound to their unique cultural backgrounds with their strong ties to the land defined through their strong bond to their families and ancestry. Eder writes that, 'die Schriftsteller und Schriftstellerinnen führen demnach in ihren Werken eine Dialog mit der eigenen Geschichte und Kultur sowie mit Geschichte und Kultur der Nicht-Roma'.<sup>8</sup>

In all of the narratives discussed in this thesis, the paradox of the ongoing search for Heimat in the land of the perpetrators is evident, yet this Romani writing refuses to reduce the experience and representation of landscape to a purely negative matter. The first German language Romani narratives by Franz and Ceija Stojka created space to speak about the Romani experience of the Holocaust in a social and political environment which was only just beginning to be accepting of this experience. Establishing Romani culture and tradition as part of the German and Austrian landscapes became an integral part of these narratives as Franz and Stojka cautiously first wrote their histories into the wider histories of their home countries. Franz works against stereotypes in her text, particularly about the notion that has long been present that 'Gypsies' are guided not by intellect, but by sensuality, and marks her own traumatic experiences with new images of Romanies as she fights to maintain some dignity in the camps. The representations of nature in the work of Franz set a particular tone for Romani writing. She establishes the German landscape as also belonging to the Sinti, who have lived in Germany for centuries and have established their own traditions within that landscape. Ceija Stojka reveals a darker image of this relationship with nature in her homeland of Austria, revealing the worry

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<sup>6</sup>Solms, 'Erzählen als Kunst', p. 120.

<sup>7</sup>Tebbutt, 'Conclusion', p. 155.

<sup>8</sup>Eder, *Geboren*, p. 231.

and hardships involved in Romani life. For Lessing, Germany occupies the space of Heimat in that it connects him with his idyllic childhood on the road and his dead parents, but for him it is also a place where his father was murdered and his opportunity to become a successful musician was cruelly cut off. However, his remembering of the shared experience of fear and trauma with other Germans as he portrays the carnage of the streets of Dresden reveals his identification with his German identity. Karl Stojka highlights his family's long history in Austria and mourns the loss of Romani tradition and language in Austria, which he feels was the result of the destruction of so many Romani lives in the Holocaust. A strong bond with geographical place is also apparent in Otto and Marianne Rosenberg's attachment to Berlin which is revealed in their texts and their work for Germany: he as an activist working towards a dialogue with non-Romanies to achieve equal rights for Romanies and she as a musician, competing for Germany with German *Schlager* songs. Stefan Horvath further emphasises the threatening quality that the landscape of Austria still holds for Romanies today and confronts the silence regarding the vulnerable position of Romanies in Austria, himself shameful at having remained silent for so long.

While these narratives represent a bold crossing into the new territory of self-assertion within and outwith the Romani community through the written word, they also reveal an expression of caution. None of the writers write with explicit resentment in their texts, though a certain amount degree of Améry's concept of 'Ressentiment' can be found in all of them; they reveal the desire to address the secondary victimisation of forgetting which they experienced after 1945 and want to put forth their narratives to combat this forgetting as a constant reminder to the perpetrators of what they went through. However, these writers seek to establish a narrative tone which does not accuse or attach blame and do so by adopting the victim's narrative voice or by illustrating moments of connection with non-Romanies. Ceija Stojka establishes a narrative voice of herself as a young child in the camps, from which she rarely removes herself in *Wir leben im Verborgenen*. Similarly Otto Rosenberg recalls his memories in the voice of an older child, remembering his impressions of the horrific camps and his own heroic attempts to survive. Philomena Franz, in changing her narrative to the present tense when she goes back into her memories of that time, also evokes the voice of herself as a victim. Lessing and Karl Stojka retain the voices of adults looking back on their experiences, but make clear the outstanding circumstances with which they had to contend at a young age. The choice of these narrative voices, which exercise restraint in their representations of victimisation, reveal a certain caution which further points to the vulnerability the writers still feel in their home countries. The child's narrative voice, pure in its innocence and far removed from the criminal and asocial elements with which Romanies were charged, represents a safe choice in the memory of the Romani experience of the Holocaust. As previously discussed, the Romani *Porrajmos* does not yet occupy a clearly defined place in history and so the voicing of the personal and

individual memory of it remains cautious.

To conclude this thesis, I will address the question posed in my Introduction as to whether or not these narratives ultimately function beyond a way of remembering of the Holocaust and if they mark the beginning of Romani German language writing tradition. The fact that these texts reveal many aspects of Romani culture in Germany and Austria and the individual contemporary concerns (such as denial of identity, loss of traditions through the loss of so many family members, the inviability of Romani lifestyle in the modern world) suggests a possibility that Romani German language writing could develop beyond remembering the experiences of victimisation in the Holocaust. Certainly, as I have shown, Horvath's *Katzenstreu* is an interesting piece of work that branches out from the traditional autobiographical form used by other Romani writers to explore Romani identity and the Holocaust. His use of fictional elements and his explorations of current Austrian Romani and non-Romani society are worthy of consideration as he continues to remain active in Romani literary organisations in Austria.

It would be worth looking in more detail at the writing being produced in Austria and Germany today by Romanies who may not have been born in these countries but who write in German as well as Romani and have much to tell readers about the current space Romanies occupy in Austria and Germany. An interesting comparison would be the reception and support of this new Romani writing in Germany and in Austria and what it can further reveal about the current situation of Romanies there. Publications by Romani writers (particularly from the former Yugoslavia) thus far continue to reveal something of the 'threatening landscapes' Horvath has suggested in his own texts. These narratives continue to reveal more about Romani life in Germany and in Austria, not only in terms of life among the majority population of these countries and the learning of the German language, but also in terms of the interactions and dialogues between Romanies long resident in Austria and those who have recently moved there. Indeed the expression of the diversity of Romani communities and culture is important in light of the current drive for a collective Romani identity. Through engaging in dialogue and expressing their own diversity through self-representation and self-expression, Romanies from different communities, backgrounds and experiences can reduce the risk of having their collective identity becoming further simplified and stereotyped by others.

I finish by quoting two poems: one by Ilija Jovanović who moved to Vienna from Rumska near Belgrade in 1971 at the age of 21. He first published poems in Gerald Nitsche's volume *Österreichische Lyrik und kein Wort Deutsch*, before going on to publish two volumes of poetry. He currently has a leading position at the Romano Centro in Vienna. In his poem, 'Bündel', he reflects on the difficulties involved in being a stranger in a land full of strangers:

Stets im Bündel gebunden  
deine Habseligkeiten, Fremder  
die Knoten des Bündels festgezogen

den Stab durch die Knoten geschoben

Jetzt wartest du  
auf die Gnade der Behörde  
je nachdem hebt  
oder  
senkt sich  
deine Hand mit dem Bündel

Und suche dich ja nicht  
hier zu entfalten  
Fremder  
du  
bist kein Mensch  
kein Bürger des Landes

Du selbst bist nichts mehr  
als ein lang hier lebendes Bündel  
das sich nicht öffnen  
und  
nicht entfalten darf<sup>9</sup>

In 'Bündel', Jovanović deals with the theme of belonging, place and home. His poem reveals a threatening and unwelcoming landscape which echoes the concerns Horvath addresses in *Katzenstreu*. Whereas the natural world is often represented as a source of comfort and giver of life in Romani narrative (Ceija Stojka's *Lebensspender* tree, for example), the country of Austria is described as a threatening space. Jovanović's poem describing the anonymity and hopelessness in being reduced to a waiting number at the official *Behörden* in Austria, makes the distinction between the universal natural world and the country of Austria. He is not allowed to make himself at home here. While many advances have been made, particularly through work by Romano Centro, in ensuring educational and cultural opportunities for Romanies through their own publication, 'Romano Centro', as well as the active cultural organisation in Oberwart, Burgenland which publishes the bilingual Romani Patrin journal,<sup>10</sup> the Romani claim to space within the Austrian landscape remains insecure and unsettled.

Similarly, Rajko Djurić, who came from Belgrade to Germany in 1991, has written poetry characterised by a search for the security and place offered by the concept of Heimat. He has written poetry in Serbian and Romani as well as academic works in German; many of his

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<sup>9</sup>Ilija Jovanović, 'Bündel Budjo' in *Österreichische Lyrik und kein Wort Deutsch* (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1990), pp. 18-23.

<sup>10</sup>See Baumgartner, p. 49.



poems have been translated into German. Djurić writes of a longing for origin, history and place in 'Ohne Haus (Heim) ohne Grab'.

Oh weh mir auf ewig  
Oh mein Vater  
Du ohne Grab  
Wir ohne Haus  
Daß wir vom Winde verweht werden  
Und der Welt Müll sind

Wo sollen wir hin  
Bis wo hin

Oh liebe Mutter  
Auf welchen Stein soll ich treten  
Woher dich rufen

Verschlossen ist uns der Himmel  
Die Erde scheint öde  
Ohne Menschenseele

Wo sollen wir hin  
Wie weit noch

Der eine näher  
Der andere ferner  
Durch die Weglosigkeit des Daseins<sup>11</sup>

Djurić's images of nature in this poem as he questions his search for home and place is reminiscent of the themes of establishing Heimat, facing persecution and threat, and insecurity that the writers discussed in this thesis explored in their own work.

Romani writers in Germany and Austria as yet make up a small and non-cohesive literary community; the further development of German language Romani writing depends on the reception of these works in making up the other side of the dialogue which has been started. The themes of Heimat, memory and the narration of identity explored in this thesis offer rich topics for further discussion in relation to many more German and Austrian Romani texts.

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<sup>11</sup>Rajko Djurić, 'Ohne Haus (Heim) ohne Grab' in *Zigeunerische Elegien: Gedichte in Romani und Deutsch* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1989), p. 19.

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